

Article 19 calls on Syria to repeal emergency law

NICOSIA (AP) — A London based human rights group Friday called on Syria to end its 30-year state of emergency, release all political prisoners, lift the ban on independent political parties and abolish censorship. The group, Article 19, said it was issuing the call in a letter to President Hafez Assad to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the law, which falls Monday. Syria celebrates that date as the anniversary of the 1963 coup led by the now-ruling Arab Baath Socialist Party. Article 19 said the emergency law has been used to ban and violently suppress a number of non-government political parties including the Party of Communist Action and the Muslim Brotherhood. "Political suspects have been arrested, tortured and detained often without charge or trial for long periods, in some cases over two decades," the group said in its letter. "Trials of such suspects are rare and even when held have always fallen below the international standards of due process and are rarely public." It listed a number of names of political prisoners, including Rida Al Turk, first secretary of the banned Communist Party politburo. It said he was arrested in 1980 and has been held since without charge or trial.

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King attends Mutah celebration

MUTAH (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Friday attended a grand celebration at Mutah University marking the 800th anniversary of the death of Muslim leader Saladin who was born in Iraq on 1137 and died in Damascus on 1193. King Hussein was received upon arriving at the celebration site by Mutah University President Mohammad Adnan Al Bakhit, members of the Royal Commission of Mutah University and members of the university's deans council. Dr. Bakhit delivered an address in which he welcomed King Hussein and lauded the role played by Sultan Saladin in liberating the Holy City of Jerusalem from the invading Crusaders. Dr. Bakhit said Sultan Saladin, who was born in Iraq and grew up in Baalbak, Lebanon, unified the lands of Egypt, Greater Syria, Iraq and Yemen into one state.

Rockets land in Israeli-held zone

TYRE, Lebanon (R) — Guerrillas fired two Katyusha rockets into Israel's self-declared "security zone" in South Lebanon Thursday night and both fell near the Israeli border, security sources said Friday. They said artillery responded by lobbing eight rounds towards the launching sites. The Israeli army said Thursday one Katyusha hit the western part of the zone but there were no casualties or damage. A spokesman for a U.N. peacekeeping force in South Lebanon said Fijian troops found and dismantled two Katyushas linked to a timer on Thursday afternoon. Hizbollah (Party of God) said its guerrillas attacked a patrol of the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia on the edge of the zone Thursday, killing four militiamen.

Yeltsin, Clinton to meet in Canada

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bill Clinton and Russian President Boris Yeltsin will hold their April summit in Vancouver, Canada, U.S. and Russian officials said Friday. The summit, originally billed as a one-way meeting, will be held over two days, April 3-4, said the U.S. sources.

Ridley dies at 64

LONDON (R) — Former British cabinet minister Lord Ridley, who resigned from the government three years ago in a row over anti-German remarks, has died, a source close to the family said Friday. Ridley, 64, was an outspoken critic of closer ties with Europe and a stalwart of the government of former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Ridley, an acerbic figure from the right wing of the ruling Conservatives, resigned as trade and industry secretary in 1990 over a magazine interview in which he accused the Germans of using proposed monetary union as a tool to take over Europe. He served in Thatcher's cabinet for most of the 1980s, as transport, environment and then trade secretary.

Turkey to probe radical Islam

ANKARA (R) — School inspectors in Turkey will visit the mainly-Kurdish southeast to check reports that Muslim fundamentalists are spreading propaganda in schools there, the education minister said Friday. Koksal Topkan told the Anatolia news agency recent press reports and complaints had spurred the ministry to send five inspectors to the province of Batman, where the Hizbollah (Party of God) militants are said to be spreading propaganda.

Police expect more arrests in blast at World Trade Centre

25-year-old Arab arraigned in New York

NEW YORK (Agencies) — Investigation of the bombing of the World Trade Centre zeroed in Friday on Muslim fundamentalists in the United States after a young Arab was charged with the attack. New York City Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly said more arrests were expected in the case which a federal prosecutor described as "the single most destructive act of terrorism ever committed in America." "That is a distinct possibility (more arrests)," he said in an interview with ABC Television's Good Morning America. Mr. Kelly declined to speculate on the motive of Mohammad Salameh, the man arrested Thursday and charged as the builder of the massive bomb that destroyed three floors of the twin-tower complex, killed five persons and injured more than 1,000. "We've got someone who we think was a significant player in this incident. We are hoping for developments similar to this. We are certainly not precluding that others were involved," Mr. Kelly said. A federal law officer saw, however, that key people linked to the suspect in the bombing had

disappeared and might have fled to the Middle East. Investigators "know a few of the people involved with (Salameh). We can't say whether it is four or five, or 12 or 15," the official told the Associated Press on the condition of anonymity. It was not clear if those sought were suspects. Federal agents continued to search Friday for accomplices and a clear motive in the bombing. Salameh was arrested when he tried to get back his \$400 deposit for the rented van believed to have held the bomb. Salameh, 25, described as a follower of a radical Egyptian cleric, Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, was ordered held without bail Thursday. Sheikh Abdul Rahman, 54 and blind, has lived in self-imposed exile in New Jersey since 1990. He was acquitted a decade ago in Egypt on charges that he sanctioned the 1981 assassination of President Anwar Sadat. But in a statement released Friday through an Arab-American community leader in New York, the sheikh "unequivocally denounced the bombing." Dr. M.T. Mebdi, secretary-general of the National Council

on Islamic Affairs, said the sheikh told him in a telephone call from the Detroit area: "The Holy Koran commands the faithful not to commit aggression... the bombing of the World Trade Centre could not have been done by a true Muslim." Investigators were led to Salameh by a 46-centimetre piece of axle found in the rubble under the twin towers, where the bomb exploded. The scrap bore the vehicle identification number of a van Salameh had rented from a Ryder dealership just across the Hudson River in Jersey City. After the blast, Salameh reported the van stolen and went to the dealership three times to get his deposit back, handing over rental papers that a government source said were covered with nitrites. Nitrites are found in some explosives, and traces were found at the blast site. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents were waiting for the Jersey City resident when he showed up at the Ryder dealership Thursday morning. "He didn't want to give up that \$400," said Patrick Galasso, the rental agent. Authorities were still uncertain

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Snags hit Afghanistan peace pact

ISLAMABAD (R) — Rival Afghan leaders said Friday a peace accord to end their bloody civil war was in sight, although differences remained over who would hold the powerful position of defence minister. "I expect good news will soon be in the air about the positive results of the talks," said Gulbudin Hekmatyar, powerful chief of the hardline dissident Hezb-e-Islami party. Clashes erupted overnight in the capital Kabul when the army repulsed an attempt by the minority Shiite Hezb-e-Wahdat party to retake positions lost in battles last month. Exchanges of rockets and artillery boomed over the western suburbs for four hours into the early morning, sending Kabul residents fleeing for their lives. Hezb-e-Islami accused the army of shelling its positions, but the Defence Ministry said the misunderstanding was cleared up after Hezb-e-Islami was informed it was not the target. "I have come to Pakistan with the intention of reaching an agreement," Mr. Hekmatyar said in a speech in the northwestern Pakistani city of Peshawar. A representative remained in Islamabad to take part in talks, he said.

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Palestinians to visit U.S. for talks on peace process

TUNIS (Agencies) — A Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) official said Friday they expected Palestinian negotiators to meet U.S. officials in Washington soon to talk about Middle East peace talks. One official said the PLO gave permission to negotiators to visit Washington to "go deeper into the U.S. proposals" after a meeting in Tunis of its Executive Committee. The officials did not say who will go. Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Al-Hariri said Thursday his country will go to the next round of U.S.-sponsored Middle East peace talks, which Washington expects to start in April. But Faisal Al Hussaini, the head of the Palestinian delegation, expressed reservations over a U.S. plan to restart the talks Thursday, saying "ambiguities" had emerged in U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's proposals. Palestinians insist their delegation cannot return to face-to-face talks with Israel before a crisis over 400 Palestinians expelled to Lebanon is resolved. The talks have been suspended since the expulsion on Dec. 17. The PLO Executive Committee decided to let the negotiators go to Washington after hearing a report from PLO Executive Committee member Mahmood Abbas on his mission to Moscow this week, officials said.

Egypt received Thursday a message from Mr. Christopher regarding the peace process, a Cairo Foreign Ministry official said. The official said the message from Mr. Christopher to Foreign Minister Amr Moussa was part of consultations regarding the resumption of the Middle East peace talks in Washington. He said that April 19 was the date suggested by the U.S. Mr. Christopher's message was relayed by U.S. Ambassador to Egypt Robert Pelletreau to Mr. Moussa. Mr. Hariri said Tuesday Lebanon wants Israel to take back the 400 Palestinians stranded in South Lebanon weeks ago. Asked whether the continuation of the peace talks depended on a solution to the crisis, Lebanese journalists quoted Mr. Hariri as saying on Thursday: "This is our position: we are with the peace negotiations (with Israel) and are going to the negotiations and we adhere to the implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 799." Resolution 799, passed a day after Israel banished the Palestinians to South Lebanon, demands that the Jewish state immediately take them all back. "What we care about is that the deportees do not enter Lebanese land," said Mr. Hariri, reiterating Beirut's stand on the exiles. "We prefer their return to their homelands as soon as possible."



A Palestinian woman Friday passes Israeli soldiers patrolling Arab East Jerusalem (AFP photo)

75 feared killed in crash near Macedonian capital

SKOPJE, Macedonia (Agencies) — Seventy-five people were feared killed Friday when a Fokker passenger plane plunged 400 metres to the ground shortly after it took off from the Macedonian capital, Macedonian radio said. Controllers at Skopje's Petrovac airport said the Fokker 100, owned by the Macedonian company Palair, "fell out of the sky," one minute after it took off for Zurich just after noon (1100 GMT). It was believed to be carrying 97 people. The radio said 75 bodies were believed to be in the wreckage of the twin turbofan aircraft, which came down in a field about 11 kilometres east of Skopje near the village of Aracinovo. Four of 22 injured survivors taken to hospital had died and another five were fighting for their lives, the radio said. Witnesses said at least 14 of the injured had horrific burns. The director of Skopje airport, Dagoje Filipovski, said he did

not know the cause of the crash or have the passengers' nationalities. Belgrade Radio said an initial investigation indicated that one of the jet's two engines apparently failed during takeoff on a flight to Zurich, Switzerland. The Fokker 100 crashed about 500 metres from the end of the runway in heavy snow, airport officials said. They said visibility was only about 400 metres. All that remained of the jet was half the cockpit and one engine with a small piece of the plane attached. Charred wreckage was strewn over a snow-dusted field. Fokker spokesman Bart van Veen said the plane was leased to Palair. The Fokker 100 is a 100-seat twin engine jet designed for short and medium-length flights. Introduced in the late 1980s, it is the Amsterdam-based manufacturer's latest model and the mainstay of its fleet. Fokker N.V. said Palair had leased the plane one month ago.

tioned in the former Yugoslavia republic assisted in rescue operations. The military hospital appealed via radio for blood. The crash occurred more than 160 kilometres from any fighting in former Yugoslavia. Macedonia has avoided the bloody conflict that has wracked two other former Yugoslav republics that declared independence Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, few countries have recognised Macedonia because of objections by neighbouring Greece to its name — the same as that of a northern Greek province. Fokker spokesman Bart van Veen said the plane was leased to Palair. The Fokker 100 is a 100-seat twin engine jet designed for short and medium-length flights. Introduced in the late 1980s, it is the Amsterdam-based manufacturer's latest model and the mainstay of its fleet. Fokker N.V. said Palair had leased the plane one month ago.

Jordanians seek \$3 billion in Gulf crisis compensation from Geneva-based U.N. fund

By Mariam M. Shahin
Jordan Times Staff Reporter
AMMAN — Day in and day out Yahya Oteibi sits in a cold office just off Jabal Amman's Third Circle and fills out forms after form. Taking them home every night to recheck his work, Mr. Oteibi feels dutybound to make sure that every application for Gulf War compensation contains all the necessary details. "No question must be left unanswered, no 'I' without a line, no 'I' without a dot," he says. Mr. Oteibi is one of the nearly 400,000 Jordanian and Palestinian returnees from Kuwait. As head of the Cooperative Society for Gulf War Returnees, he spearheads the effort to obtain compensation from the United Nations Compensation Commission in Geneva. Some 91,550 applications for financial compensation have been made to the Geneva office

through the Jordanian Ministry of Labour, which is the commission's local official counterpart in this endeavour. Everything from compensation for unexpected departure to compensation for furniture and pension loss to personal injury is being filed. Cardboard boxes filled with data on companies and partnerships in Kuwait line the cold office of Mr. Oteibi. Along with one volunteer assistant, Amina, Mr. Oteibi goes through every application word by word. "We appreciate what the Ministry of Labour is doing on our behalf. But we need to recheck everything for ourselves — it's safer," he says. Many of the applicants make mistakes while filling the forms or do not have complete information or papers to support their claims. Many returnees left Kuwait in such hurry that they left important documents behind.

"Some people had them in safety deposit boxes in banks and others kept some of the documents with their Kuwaiti patrons or partners," Mr. Oteibi says. A quick departure and the chaos of occupied Kuwait are frequently cited by applicants as reasons why their legal and business papers are not complete. But Mr. Oteibi fears that the commission in Geneva will throw out incomplete applications and thus he has taken it upon himself to try and assure that every application is complete. While applicant has yet received compensation from the Geneva commission, Mr. Oteibi believes that the commission will make some compensation available soon. "It will happen sooner or later. Right now our mission is to record our claims," he says. Mr. Oteibi fears that there will be "counter-claims" from the Kuwaiti patrons and partners of

many Jordanian businessmen and companies. "If we can prove that the businesses were ours and that because of the special circumstances in Kuwait the Kuwaitis were just a 'front,' then we will be okay," he says. The need to "double-check" all applications is not because he does not trust the abilities of the Ministry of Labour staff but because "not all those checking the forms at the Ministry of Labour are familiar with Kuwaiti names or commercial norms." The returnee society has hired nine translators, many of whom are themselves returnees, to help with translating legal documents. A near clash between the returnee society and the Ministry of Labour was avoided earlier this year after the ministry prolonged its deadline for accepting compensation applications. A January deadline set by the

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Four years into democratisation, self-censorship is a reality in Jordan

By Stephanie Genkin
Special to the Jordan Times
AMMAN — Three years into the democratisation process, the Jordanian press is still unable to completely remove the constraints imposed through decades of censorship, many journalists say. They claim that the press is still subject to government, religious, cultural and professional pressures that have eased but not disappeared since the Kingdom held parliamentary elections in 1989. For those journalists critical of development of the Jordanian press, censorship continues to obstruct freedom of expression. According to reporters and editors interviewed, neither official government censors nor the responsible ministry

intervene in the affairs of the press, a practice characteristic of the pre-democratic era. Most agree, however, that this has by no means eliminated censorship altogether. Many in the field maintain that numerous forms of censorship are endemic in the business: Government, advertisers, editors, and self-censorship practised by journalists themselves. According to Musa Keilani, chief editor of Al-Dustour Arabic daily, government ownership of the majority of shares of the Arabic newspapers is a threat to press freedom. "The government owns 58 per cent of Al-Rai' and 38.5 per cent of Al-Dustour. This percentage is a controlling share by the government," Dr. Keilani said. "This makes chief editors watch their step. They

don't want to antagonise their major shareholder." As long as the government remains actively involved in the press, the Al-Dustour editor said, it will continue to impose what he referred to as "mental censorship." "Mental censorship is when editors and chief editors have in their minds that somebody somewhere can kick them out for anything he doesn't like to be published," he explained. Because three major Arabic dailies are substantially owned by the government, officials continue to have an impact on reportage and news coverage, another editor explained. The frontpages of the Arabic press often are filled with public relations items, he said. Government officials and politicians feed reporters the information they want the pub-

lic to read in order to bolster their performance records or to increase their constituency in an upcoming election, the editor explained. Chief editors comply with this practice for two reasons, according to the source, explaining the symbiotic nature of the relationship between chief editors and government officials. "First they get favours in return," he said. "Secondly by appeasing these officials they continue to supply the chief editors with information and news," he added. In addition, the government line continues to dominate the pages of the daily press through Petra, the news agency owned and operated by the government, said one journalist. "Look at the pages of the

Arabic press," he said. "Almost every article published in the home news pages in a Petra item," he explained. "Our understanding of national and municipal issues is almost entirely based on government propaganda, he added. One of the pitfalls of the press, in the opinion of many reporters, is that there is no independent person running the newspaper. They claim that editors are "caught up in a game of politics," or that they are too preoccupied with business interests. "You can't criticise Minister X because he is a friend of the chief editor," said a staff reporter at Al-Rai'. "If a journalist criticises an opponent of the chief editor, however, he (the chief editor) might highlight it," the reporter explained. They use criticism for their

political purposes, he added. Censorship is not always the result of pressure from outside parties. Journalists claim that chief editors are often the most rigid censors. Many reporters believe that chief editors, who they say continue to practice their profession according to outdated rules and ideas, needed to be replaced when the democratic process began. "The new situation should have brought in new people into the press and new methods," explains one journalist on staff at an Arabic daily. The "old guard" of editors and officials, however, still dominate the news industry, said the reporter. "People were moulded a long time ago. The old mentality still prevails." Many journalists claim that chief editors are not willing to

accommodate more in-depth or hard-hitting news coverage. Several reporters added that their editors continue to discourage them from pursuing investigative reporting. Handling a story means that journalists must "check facts, avoid extremism and refrain from smearing people," explained Mahmoud Al Sharif, minister of information. Journalists must learn to exercise responsibility, he added. More often than not, before a news item reaches a stage when it can be changed or disregarded by an editor or criticised by an official or an advertiser, the article is censored by the journalist himself. According to one part-time reporter, "self-censorship is so widespread because many

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Budget

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Age group	Percentage of respondents
18-29	65
30-49	70
50-69	75
70+	85



His Majesty King Hussein attends Friday prayers at the Royal Guard Mosque. The King was joined by His Royal Highnesses Prince Faisal, Prince Hamzah and Prince Hashem, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Private Chamberlain Prince Ali Ben Nayef, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Izzeddin Al Khatib, Chief Islamic Justice Nooh Salman and Dr. Ahmad Helayel. Also attending the prayer were Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Fathi Abu Taleb and the commander of Al Hussein Ben Ali Brigade.

Aid distributed in Maan, Hasa areas

MAAN (Petra) — Secretary General of the Ministry of Social Development Mohammad Al Sqour Thursday supervised the distribution of food supplies to the needy in Maan governorate in accordance with a programme prepared by the ministry.

The programme will continue throughout the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Dr. Sqour also visited the ministry's centres in the governorate and was familiarised with their needs and the services they offer to the public.

The Secretary General also called at the Hasa area and met with its administrative governor, the mayor and heads of local tribes.

Dr. Sqour told the meeting that the ministry was ready to present cash and in-kind assistance to the poor in various parts of the country.

The Hasa mayor said the municipal council has allocated a plot of land for the ministry's use.

After distributing aid to the needy in the town, Dr. Sqour inaugurated a charity bazaar at Al Hasa Women's Society for Social Development. The three-day bazaar includes embroidery, carpets and rugs, knitwear and artificial flowers.

About 150 women are members of the society which holds training courses for them in tri-cot, flower arrangement and other handicrafts.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

King congratulates president of Ghana

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Thursday sent a cable to the President of Ghana congratulating him in his own name and on behalf of Jordan's people and government on his country's national day and wishing him continued good health and happiness and the people of Ghana further progress and prosperity.

Daylight savings begins April 1

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan will switch to daylight savings time as of Apr. 1, according to a communiqué issued by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker. Clocks should be set one hour forward after midnight on March 31. Daylight saving time puts Jordan three hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT).

Land office collects JD3,622,111 in February

AMMAN (Petra) — The Land and Survey Department last February collected JD3,622,111 up from JD3,410,361 in January, thus achieving an increase of 6 per cent, according to department Director Ali Gharaibeh. Mr. Gharaibeh said February 1993 figures were 68 per cent more than those of February 1992 when the department collected JD2,165,955.

City development bank chief tours villages

AMMAN (Petra) — Director General of the Cities and Villages Development Bank Zuhair Khalifeh Thursday toured the municipalities of Irbid, Salt, Jerash, Kiteh, Souf, Faisaliyyeh and Al Muqairah where he inspected projects financed by the bank. Dr. Khalifeh discussed with municipality officials in the areas he visited their areas' needs for projects for the current year.

Labour education head visits institutes

AMMAN (Petra) — Director of the Labour Education and Information Department Mahmoud Al Tell Thursday discussed with officials at the labour education institutes in various parts of Jordan the conditions and activities of these institutes in 1993. Mr. Tell stressed the need for these institutes to develop and update their cultural programmes.

Civil defence holds fire drills

IRBID (Petra) — On the occasion of the International Civil Defence Day, the Irbid Civil Defence Department (CDD) Thursday organised at Yarmouk University a fire extinguishing exercise. CDD sources in Irbid said the drill proved the high-level of performance of the civil defence personnel.

Proceeds of Madaba bazaar go to charity

MADABA (Petra) — The Madaba District Social Development Centres which are operated by the Queen Alia Jordan Social Welfare Fund (QAF) Thursday organised a charity bazaar which included agricultural produce and foodstuffs. The proceeds of the one-day bazaar will go to the Third Annual Charity Campaign which is organised by QAF.

Israelis seal off Gaza home

(Continued from page 1)

The house of Iman and Amin Shaath was sealed before dawn. They were directly involved in the murder," an army official said.

At least 200 people have been arrested so far on suspicion of participating in the killing. In the past the army has demolished or sealed whole sections of streets where Palestinian crowds had attacked and killed Israelis.

2 ex-exiles freed

Israel has freed two ailing Palestinians who had been brought back last month from exile in Lebanon, the army said Friday.

The two released Thursday were identified as Zuhair Labbad, 26, who suffers from a kidney malfunction, and Zuhdi Tabbaleh, 23, who has a stomach ailment.

The army spokesman's office said one was freed for medical reasons, the other because he had completed a term of "administrative detention," under which he was held without charge or trial.

The spokesman's office did not know which release order applied to which man.

They were among more than 400 Palestinians expelled by Israel to Lebanon on Dec. 17 as alleged supporters of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which were blamed for the murders of six Israeli troops.

The expulsions have become a stumbling block to resuming Middle East peace negotiations. Palestinians refused to return to the U.S.-backed talks until Israel takes back the 400 men.

The U.N. Security Council condemned the expulsions and ordered Israel to repatriate the men. Israel refused, and later cut a deal with the United States to return about 100 of the men.

Student elections pit Islamists against tribal coalition

By Nermeen Murad
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — University of Jordan students go to the polls Monday to elect an 80-member council amid wide expectations that the Islamists will retain control of the body despite predictions of a stronger showing of the mainly tribal Nationalist Jordanian Coalition bloc.

The race among an estimated 250 student candidates for the 80-seat council will be the second to be held at the university and is expected to divide the student body into two clear blocs of Islamists against a coalition of tribal representatives.

The leftists, who boycotted the 1992 elections, are expected to give their support to the Islamists. The few independents on the race list are expected to withdraw

as the date for the elections nears.

The seemingly depoliticised elections will serve as an indication, albeit on a small scale, of the divisions and alliances which will appear in the Kingdom's national elections scheduled for later this year. The university rules ban candidates from running for elections on political platforms, in conformity with the laws that ban the politicisation of educational centres. But candidates have, nevertheless, formed blocs and distributed leaflets announcing their commitment to one side or another.

A copy of the Islamists' programme at the university, which was made available to the Jordan Times, deals with various issues relevant to administrative matters and extracurricular activities at the university but excludes any

mention of Islamist ideas.

"We want students and others watching us to know that we have programmes and ideas that are practical and touch their lives and that we are not just the bearers of 'There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet, great as that motto is,' an Islamist candidate told the Jordan Times in an interview.

He charged that the Islamists would be satisfied with a smaller showing in this year's elections — they gained 64 out of 80 seats last year — and that their numbers this time may be closer to the 50 figure.

They attribute this expected decrease in numbers to the growth of a more organised Jordanian nationalist bloc, which largely depends on utilising the tribal affiliations of students, and the apparent ineffectiveness of

the leftists in the elections. The Islamists also claim that the university management "controlled" the elections when it banned students from running in political blocs, a charge that the university president, Dr. Fawzi Gharaibeh, categorically denies.

"We applied the laws which have been published in the university paper," Dr. Gharaibeh told the Jordan Times in a telephone interview, adding that some students had asked the management to amend the law ahead of the elections.

He said the university did not accept the amendment proposals because of their timing which could have meant that the university was siding with one party over the other. "If amendments are needed then we will look into them after the elections and not just before them," The demands

for amendments came from the Islamists who rejected university laws which limit the candidate to running as an independent rather than a member of a bloc.

"We have to maintain our neutrality as administrators which is a must for gaining the confidence of the students," Dr. Gharaibeh said, explaining that had the university accepted the demands of the Islamists they would appear to be favouring them in Monday's elections.

The "surprise" element in the elections is the reported coalition between the left and the right (Islamists) against the tribal bloc even though university administrators privately say that the strength of the leftists "cannot tilt the results of the elections one way or another on the ground."

Islamist candidates admit that the race may boil down to a

contest between them and the nationalists and say that they understand that on a wider political scale in the country "this may become the reality of the political scene."

As a result of this understanding, they say they have utilised the tribal and geographic element in their own choices of candidates but add that they do not want to "institutionalise it."

Observers of the candidates and their divisions into blocs believe that the race may turn into one between the Islamists and the nationalists with the leftists choosing to throw in their lot with the Islamists, but they also add that it was still "premature to judge."

"The trends will become apparent when the results come out," one university observer said.

King donates JD1,405,598 to Jerusalem's Awqaf Council

By Ella Nasrallah
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A delegation representing the Awqaf Council and holy places in Jerusalem left Amman for home Friday morning following a three-day visit to Jordan.

The delegation was received by His Majesty King Hussein who made a generous donation towards helping the council carry out its tasks.

Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Secretary-General Ahmad Helayel told the Jordan Times Friday that the delegation members, except for the mufti of Jerusalem, all returned via the King Hussein Bridge, adding that the King's donation of JD1,405,598 has already been transferred to the council's account.

King Hussein, responding favourably to appeals by the staff of the Awqaf Council in Jerusalem to improve their living conditions, announced his personal donation to help meet this end.

This is the second major personal donation in 10 months by His Majesty towards the holy shrines in the city of Jerusalem. Last April the King made a personal contribution of \$8.24 million to help restore the Dome of the Rock.

Jordan is solely responsible not only for the restoration of the holy shrine but also for the Awqaf staff and all matters related to the holy places in Jerusalem.



Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Sheikh Izzeddin Al Khatib Al Tamimi meets with Mufti of Jerusalem Sheikh Suleiman Al Jaabari Thursday (Petra photo).

Sheikh Suleiman Al Jaabari, who succeeded the late Sheikh Saadeddin Al Alami as mufti of Jerusalem, together with his council members were guests at the King's Iftar banquet last Wednesday.

The council conveyed to His Majesty the general situation in the holy places and thanked him for his continued support.

Sheikh Jaabari was formally appointed by the Jordanian government to succeed Sheikh Alami who died Feb. 6 at the age of 82.

The new mufti and his council voiced their deep appreciation to the King for his generosity in a cable Thursday saying that the gesture reflected the King's deep

concern over the situation of the holy shrines and the people involved in the upkeep of the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock.

Sheikh Jaabari Thursday met Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Izzeddin Al Khatib Al Tamimi and discussed the general affairs of Islamic shrines in Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, it was reported that work is continuing on the restoration of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem; a project undertaken by the Mivan firm of Ireland.

The overall cost of the restoration project was expected to be around \$10 million.

Government to set up 9 new courts

AMMAN (Petra) — The government plans to set up nine new courts of law in different governorates, and the Ministry of Justice has already begun preparations for the project. Minister of Justice Yousef Mbeideen announced Thursday.

The minister said, of the nine courts, there will be six settlement courts, two municipal courts and one first instance court.

Upon directives issued by

Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, the Ministry of Justice conducted a study to determine the court needs of various governorates relative to the court cases pertaining to each governorate. The result was a recommendation to set up the nine new courts, Mr. Mbeideen said.

The Council of Ministers endorsed the project last month, and the government has made allocations for the premises, furniture, staff and other administrative requirements, the minister said.

The first instance and settlement courts will be responsible for adjudicating cases in urban and rural regions such as building, health and traffic violations, as well as family and tribal disputes.

The new courts will be established in Ajloun, Rweished, Ain Al Basha, Jizah, Dhiban, Ajy, Husseinieh, Sahab and Ruseifa.

Free industrial, commercial zones to go up in Aqaba

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordanian Free Zones Corporation (JFZC) plans to set up a free industrial zone and a free commercial zone in Aqaba for which tender documents have been prepared, according to an announcement by JFZC Director General Falaq Qudrah in a statement outlining the corporation's 1993 objectives.

Reporting also last year's achievements, Mr. Qudrah said JFZC had sufficient allocations to establish a free zone at the Sahab Industrial City and another at the Queen Alia International Airport (QAIA).

Mr. Qudrah said work is expected to be completed on these two zones by the end of this year. Furthermore, he announced

that during 1993, an industrial zone will be created at the Shidiq phosphate mines in the south. He said the zone will benefit the planned industrial and mineral complex which will produce phosphate-based products by an Indian company working in concert with the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC).

In Aqaba, a similar project will be established to serve an industrial complex being executed by the JPMC in cooperation with a Japanese firm, Mr. Qudrah said. In 1992, revenues from the free zones amounted to JD4,537,000 compared to JD3,730,000 in 1991; an increase of 21 per cent, Mr. Qudrah reported.

He said the additional revenues have enabled JFZC to cover the

costs of its various expansion projects and new installations and to pay debts due to the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ).

Noting that the free zone in Zarqa witnessed increased activities in 1992, Mr. Qudrah said a total of 1,053,000 tonnes entered the zone last year, compared to 825,720 in the 1991.

He said the total amount of goods re-exported from the free zones to Arab countries in 1992 was estimated at 1,045,000 tonnes compared to 777,000 tonnes in 1991.

Mr. Qudrah said tenders were announced towards the end of last year to develop an additional 300 dunams as annexes to existing free zone lands in order to absorb additional investors.

Local authorities help end Iraqi sit-in at U.N. envoy

By a Jordan Times
Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A group of 18 Iraqi refugees Thursday ended a sit-in at the offices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) after intervention from the local authorities, officials said Friday.

The group, which included women and children, launched the protest action Monday demanding immediate resettlement abroad by UNHCR, saying they felt "insecure" in continuing to stay in Jordan.

The Iraqis, all of whom have been granted refugee status by UNHCR, say they are political dissidents opposed to the Iraqi government.

There was no immediate means to verify the authenticity of the claims.

The group began the sit-in Monday, the same day when the strict enforcement of a Jordanian residency law went into effect.

Under the law, all foreign residents in the country — except those who have valid work or

residence permits — have to register themselves with police.

The refugees argued against registering themselves with police, saying they did not want to let their whereabouts be known to anyone.

In the meantime, they also complained that their applications for political asylum abroad were pending since several months and accused UNHCR of unfair treatment and fee-dragging.

Javier Reidmatten, chief of the UNHCR mission here, rejected the accusation and pointed out that the U.N. agency had done its part in processing the applications and forwarding them to potential host governments — mostly in Scandinavia.

It is up to the host governments to act on the applications and UNHCR could do very little in this regard," said Mr. Reidmatten, adding that "it is becoming extremely difficult these days for European countries to accept refugees."

"We are doing what we can but there are strict limitations to our role," he told the Jordan Times. "They (the sit-in protesters) are not the only ones seeking refuge abroad."

The sit-in ended after the U.N. agency sought intervention from the local security authorities.

The nature of the intervention was not immediately known, but police officials held "negotiations" with the group for several hours Thursday afternoon.

The group was no longer present outside the UNHCR building Friday morning, and U.N. officials said the refugees had moved to hotels.

Nearly 5,000 Iraqis have approached the UNHCR office in Amman seeking refuge abroad since May 1991 when the Iraqi government lifted a travel ban following the end of the Gulf war over Kuwait in March the same year.

About 500 of the applicants have been granted refugee status on a case-by-case basis by UNHCR, and over 350 of them have already left Jordan through arrangements made by the U.N. agency.

Jordanian chairs accounting conference in U.S.

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordanian accountant Tala Abu Ghazaleh, who is president of the Arab Society of Certified Accountants (ASCA) is chairing this year's week-long session of the Inter-governmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting (ISAR), which began Mar. 4 in New York.

The agenda will deal with means of improving education and practical training in the field of accounting and auditing.

Mr. Abu Ghazaleh will deliver a speech entitled "Accounting Education in the Arab World," focusing on the qualities needed for a good accountant, the gap in accounting standards between the developed world and the developing world and master plan to narrow that disparity.

Leaders in the field of accounting education will participate in a one-day forum, also chaired by Mr. Abu Ghazaleh. The programme will follow a panel format where experts representing a geographical spread of the world's countries will seek to give guidance on how the educational challenges can be met.

The Arab Society of Certified Accountants was established in 1983 in London by a group of practising accountants in the Arab World who saw the need to qualify professional accountants to adhere to the internationalisation of the accounting profession and to bring the Arab accounting profession to an internationally acceptable standard.

60% of Palestinians in occupied lands favour resumption of peace talks — poll

AMMAN (J.T.) — A recent poll conducted in the Israeli occupied territories showed that 60 per cent of Palestinians are in favour of the resumption of the Arab-Israeli peace talks if a solution is found to the expellees issue.

The poll, which was carried out by the Jerusalem Centre for Information and Communication in the occupied territories, reflected a relative optimism towards the possible outcome of the peace talks.

While 31.9 per cent said that the negotiations will not yield any positive results, 50.7 per cent said and the negotiations will achieve progress, but insufficiently, and 13.7 per cent said that negotiation is not the best route to resolving the Palestinian problem.

Over 1,190 people participated in the poll taken in front of Israeli administered General Services Offices in the occupied territories

over three days — Feb. 18, 19, 20. The sample which was gathered sporadically from individuals frequenting the offices for personal administrative reasons, such as personal identity applications, included Palestinians from all parts of the occupied territories as follows: 63.5 per cent from the West Bank, 36.5 per cent from the Gaza Strip, 21.7 per cent from the villages, 26.9 per cent from the refugee camps and 51.4 per cent from cities.

The poll also showed that 58.1 per cent of Palestinians considered representative of the Palestinian people to be the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), while 12.4 per cent said it is the Islamic movement Hamas, and 26.1 per cent said that the real representation can only be achieved through direct elections.

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WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Exhibition of paintings by four Arab artists from the United States — Ghada Jamal, Helen Khal, Suha Noursi and Afaf Zurayk — at the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation Gallery in Jabal Amman, between the First and Second Circles (10 a.m. - 4 p.m.)
- ★ Islamic book exhibition at the Islamic Centre in Zarqa.

FILM

- ★ British film entitled "The Woman He Loved" at the British Council — 7 p.m.

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Searching in the wrong place

THE ZEAL with which U.N. inspectors search for nuclear activity in Iraq is perplexing. It could be better comprehended, of course, had the international organisation given its quest a regional perspective as well. With Israel already recognised as a nuclear power and Iran fast moving in that direction, the emphasis on Iraq for ending nuclear arms development in isolation from the broader interest of making the whole Middle East a nuclear arms free zone makes a mockery of the U.N. effort and exposes the real intention of the powers behind that effort.

The international community is clearly pursuing and applying a double standard in this context and this is not the first time that it has done so in the area. The latest episode involving a search and destroy mission carried by 13 nuclear experts in Iraq comes on the heels of 17 previous efforts by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to identify nuclear sites in Iraq which found no evidence suggesting the Iraqi government is still undertaking nuclear weapons research or development. Now the U.N. is investigating in the field for the 18th time in spite of all the evidence collected earlier repudiating the charges that Baghdad may still be in possession of a mysterious underground nuclear facility. The question is when this arbitrary U.N. inspection is going to end. The U.N. Security Council cannot decide to dispatch new teams to investigate the Iraqi scene on the basis of the remotest accusations or rumours. There must come a day when this unreasonable international conduct has got to cease. The permanent members of the Security Council are called upon instead to target the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East by first ending the unlawful monopolistic possession of such mass destructive arsenals by certain countries. There is really no effective way to end the dangers of nuclear and thermonuclear arms as long as some countries have them and others do not. To break the cycle of nuclear proliferation, the comity of nations should strive to remove the initial cause for the spread of such weapons by calling on Israel and Iran to renounce not only the use of nuclear arms but also their development and possession. Only in so doing the danger of one of them or both exercising hegemony in the region could be neutralised.

As long as the U.N. keeps on targeting Iraq alone by sending one team of technical experts after the other to zig zag its territory for no good reason, its conduct could become open for all sorts of interpretations that go beyond the quest for iron clad assurances that the Iraqi regime has effectively abandoned its nuclear programme. One obvious explanation could be that there is a determined policy by some Western powers to harass the Arab country with or without a legitimate cause, for reasons that have no relation to the alleged Iraqi capacity to produce nuclear arms.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE KILLING of Israelis in the occupied Arab lands is not a manifestation of counter-terrorism on the part of the Palestinian resistance but rather a demonstration of anger and a reaction to atrocities committed by the Israelis for so long, said Al Ra'i Arabic daily. The paper said the spate of recent killings and assaults on the Israeli troops by Palestinians came in reaction to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's continuous acts of terrorism. At the same time, they display the heroism and the bravery of the oppressed people, struggling for freedom. The Palestinians are bound to escalate their attacks as they reject all the Israeli crimes and the deportation and the demolishing of homes, and they are waging a holy war aimed at liberating their homeland from occupation and ending all forms of racism practised against them, the paper continued. The brave, heroic and daring attacks on the Israelis are bound to increase in intensity and in number to such a degree that the Israelis will find it impossible to contain the situation and unable to stifle the spirit and the voice of resistance, the paper added. Despite the long years of persecution and occupation, said the paper, it is clear that the people of Gaza and the West Bank are not relenting in the struggle for liberation and it is clear that they are determined to transform the life of the Israelis into hell, making it impossible for them to enjoy safety and security anywhere.

A columnist in Al Ra'i daily voiced total support for the recently announced plans to build dams to collect rain water. Ahmad Al Miskeh said that Jordan, as an agricultural country, needs water as a major element for its survival. The construction of more dams, he said, is one step in the right direction to help the country attain its goals. The writer said that most of the rain falling on Jordan every year is wasted due to the lack of sufficient dams to collect the water for irrigation purposes. The writer made specific mention of Ministry of Water plans to build a major dam at Karameh in the Jordan Valley in April to collect rainwater, which can irrigate 400,000 dunums of land in the valley. He said that Jordanians accept the fact that farming remains the backbone of their survival and they welcome projects to help them produce more food. In fact, more food production can enhance national sovereignty and help Jordanians have a feeling of pride in their nation and its achievements. Referring to recent studies and research work in the badia and rural regions, the writer said that the country could benefit from 20 more dams in the north, centre and south in its endeavour to secure sufficient water for irrigation and other purposes. He said the cost of the construction of dams can be met at the domestic level without resorting to further borrowing from the World Bank at humiliating terms.

ADJUSTING TO A NEW WORLD Syria looks to the West

By Ed Blanche
The Associated Press

DAMASCUS — A major shuffle in the intelligence services and reports President Hafez Assad is in poor health are raising questions about where Syria is heading.

The Damascus regime is obsessively secretive and keeping track of its inner workings is extremely difficult.

But with the regime looking increasingly to the West following Communism's collapse Mr. Assad has clearly embarked on economic and political change to secure a place for Syria in the new world order.

Reports that the 62-year-old "lion of Damascus" is ailing have been circulating for months.

Since he is a key player in the Arab-Israeli peace talks, his health assumes greater importance than it may have had previously.

The Israelis have made Syria, its archenemy for decades, the cornerstone of its negotiations because, unlike the other participants, Mr. Assad rules alone and can make decisions unilaterally.

The French newspaper Liberation reported recently that Mr. Assad suffered a heart attack around Jan. 19. That was denied by presidential spokesman Jubran Kourieh.

Some Arab sources say Mr. Assad, who survived a serious heart attack in 1983, has had to reduce his workload considerably over the past two years and now works only 3-4 hours a day.

If Mr. Assad is ailing, there is little outward evidence of it and no indication that a power struggle is shaping up.

He met with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher last month to discuss the peace pro-



Hafez Assad: Growing confidence

cess and appeared to be sufficiently healthy.

Whatever Mr. Assad's condition, the regime appears to be increasingly confident as it emerges from years of isolation.

Mr. Assad's recent shakeup in the intelligence services, which have eliminated all internal dissent, would seem to underline this.

Among the commanders whom sources say were moved aside was military intelligence chief Maj. Gen. Ali Duba. Military intelligence is the most powerful of the regime's 15 security agencies.

Removing Mr. Duba, who has been linked to Syrian based militant factions, could be part of Mr. Assad's strategy to encourage the United States to drop Syria from its list of states supporting terrorism and open the door to economic aid.

The sources say Mr. Assad has promoted Muhammad Nassif, head of the general intelligence branch, which is responsible for internal security.

Mr. Nassif, an Assad relative,

is reputed to be one of the few figures to have instant access to the president.

He is also believed to be close to the president's 32-year-old son, air force Maj. Basil Assad, who has been taking an increasingly high profile of late. Some say Mr. Nassif is expected to take over the whole intelligence system, which would make him immensely powerful.

But if that is so, it marks a significant departure for Mr. Assad. He assiduously has avoided concentrated power in such a manner and has kept the military and intelligence power centres in competition to keep them from posing a threat.

Mr. Nassif's emergence as intelligence supremo would, in theory, strengthen Basil Assad's position. But it remains unclear whether Basil is actually being groomed to succeed his father.

People who know him say he lacks the political maturity and determination to rule and has shown little inclination to do so. He could be a frontman for other more powerful figures.

Mr. Assad has not publicly designated a successor. So whether power can be transferred smoothly in a country that he has ruled with an iron fist for 22 years is moot.

Syria came perilously close to civil war when Mr. Assad was felled by his heart attack a decade ago.

His unruly younger brother, Rifaat, attempted to seize power in February 1984 and was stymied only when other generals intervened.

Rifaat was sent into exile to Europe, where he lived flamboyantly in Switzerland, Spain and France. Rifaat returned to Damascus in August for his mother's funeral and, to the surprise of many, has remained.

By Ercan Ersoy
Reuters

ANKARA — Kurdish guerrilla attacks on oil installations in southeast Turkey have hampered exploration and production, and alarmed local and foreign firms working there.

Company executives said assaults on oil facilities, which often go unreported in the Turkish press, have terrified their workers and greatly complicated daily operations.

But state officials refused to link the violence directly with what they say will be a fall in Turkey's crude oil output this year to 82,000 barrels per day (BPD) from 85,600 BPD in 1992 — roughly one seventh of national consumption.

"Terrorism in the southeast has made it almost impossible for oil companies to work there," Oymen Sayer, general manager of the Turkish arm of the U.S. firm Aladdin Middle East, said. Aladdin Middle East is a fully-owned subsidiary of Aladdin Petroleum Corp., based in Wichita, Kansas.

Mr. Sayer told Reuters one of his engineers had been killed and seven other workers wounded in several Kurdish raids last year. In one attack, an engineer escaped only by feigning death.

Almost all Turkey's oil activity is concentrated in the southeast, scene of a nine-year-old rebellion by the independence-seeking Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). In September, the PKK killed two other engineers and wounded five workers employed by Mobil Oil Turk, a subsidiary of the U.S. Mobil Corp., in an attack on an oil rig in Batman province.

"We cannot go to some fields and to some depots. We operate some fields only in daytime. Security is a big problem. One

third of my personnel has resigned because of fear," Mr. Sayer said.

Some foreign oil firms say they may reduce operations in the southeast, without publicly citing the violence as a factor.

A month after the Batman attack, Mobil Oil Turk, the third biggest oil producer in Turkey, applied to have 14 of its 45 exploration licences in the southeast cancelled.

Mobil said it would not close producing fields or abandon exploration activities in the region, but would relinquish some licences because the areas they covered were unpromising.

Sayan Zorin, public relations director of Mobil, said repeated guerrilla attacks had damaged production facilities.

"The damaged areas were repaired and required security measures were immediately taken. There is no company at the moment that stopped its activity because of terrorism."

He said Mobil planned to lower oil output to 3,264 BPD in 1993 from 3,481 BPD from 27 southern wells last year.

An official from N.V. Turk Shell, a subsidiary of Royal Dutch/Shell Group, said the company would maintain production as usual despite the continuing conflict in the region.

Okan Ozdemir, general manager of state-run Turkish Petroleum Company (TPAO), also pledged to keep up normal operations.

"Local or foreign firms will not be affected in future from terrorist activities in the southeast as our government has taken necessary measures to prevent such attacks," he said.

But Ahmet Akcael, head of Turkey's general directorate of oil affairs, told Cumhuriyet news-

paper that the violence, which has killed about 5,500 people since 1984, had led some non-oil firms to halt or wind down their business in the southeast.

"We cannot say oil companies have not been affected by terrorism, which surely is a factor in decisions," he said.

Twenty-seven Turkish and foreign companies are exploring for oil and gas in Turkey, which has never been a major producer.

Some rely on army protection. Some foreign oilmen said they preferred to do without it, saying a visible military presence could attract the PKK violence they wanted to avoid.

Oil sources say PKK attacks have caused damage worth tens of thousands of dollars, but no precise figures were available.

TPAO, the largest of Turkey's five oil producers, expects its output to decline to 55,200 BPD this year from 57,643 BPD.

Shell expects its production to fall to 13,100 BPD from 14,500 last year. The U.S.-Turkish partnership ARCO Turkey Inc. projects about 1,900 BPD, down from 2,260 BPD in 1992.

Mr. Ozdemir said Turkey would import more crude oil this year to offset the anticipated drop in output and to meet new demand from an economy expected to grow at about five per cent.

Turkey will buy about 19.65 million tonnes of oil in 1993, up from about 18.5 million last year, he said.

The armed forces have intensified military pressure on the PKK in the past year, but there is no sign the revolt is over.

"The government is doing its best, this is not enough," Mr. Sayer said. "We have 31 troops and village guards protecting one field. Are we fighting a war or drilling for oil?"

Defiant for life

Cleric attacks Egypt as he faces possible U.S. deportation

By Jeanne King
Reuters

NEW JERSEY — Even as he faces possible deportation from the United States that could mean his imprisonment back in Egypt, a blind fundamentalist Muslim cleric remains steadfast in calling for the overthrow of the Cairo government.

Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman lives in exile in Jersey City, New Jersey. His sermons banned in Egypt but widely smuggled into the country by his adherents.

The dim view of his activities taken by the Egyptian government is hardly a surprise. Sheikh Abdul Rahman says the government of Hosni Mubarak should be overthrown and adds that he wouldn't mind if the Egyptian leader were killed like Anwar Sadat before him.

Mr. Sadat was gunned down in 1981 by fundamentalists who say Sheikh Abdul Rahman is their spiritual leader.

He has denied any involvement but adds: "I wish for Hosni Mubarak what happened to Sadat." He spoke to Reuters in a recent interview from his sparsely furnished apartment in this town just across the Hudson River from Manhattan.

Sheikh Abdul Rahman, 54, gives sermons throughout the region, but it is the simple audio cassette that connects him to his followers. Dozens of tapes are stacked at his apartment and a large "boom box" tape recorder sits next to him.

For the authorities, Sheikh Abdul Rahman is a political hot potato.

He is fighting the U.S. immigration and naturalisation service, which wants him deported to Egypt because he allegedly lied on his papers when he came to the United States in 1990. The authorities say he failed to disclose that he was a polygamist and was convicted in 1987 of writing a bad check in Egypt.

The Egyptian government has

reportedly been asking the United States to do something to curb the sheikh, but they do not want him back in Egypt, where he could become a magnet for opposition to the government.

"I am willing to go to Egypt right now. And if they kill me, I will be a martyr," said Sheikh Abdul Rahman.

He is awaiting an immigration judge's ruling in his case.

He even suggests the United States should support the overthrow of the Egyptian government because of alleged human rights abuses.

He accused President Mubarak of ruling Egypt "with an iron fist," adding that the Egyptian system depends on aggression and oppression.

"Everything in Egypt is fixed... a game. The West should ask Mubarak about his financial status," said the sheikh, who then accused the Egyptian president of "stealing state money."

He claimed that Egyptian jails were full of political opponents

who were being tortured by electric shock, beatings and dog attacks. Human rights groups agree that political prisoners in Egypt are subject to torture.

Sheikh Abdul Rahman also said Iraqi President Saddam Hussein must also go because of the "acts of aggression he committed against the Kuwaitis, the Kurds and his own people."

"Any Muslim wishes him out of power," he added.

Sheikh Abdul Rahman also denied that his group was involved in recent attacks on tourists in Egypt.

But he said that tourists should maintain the traditions of his country.

Predicting the establishment of an Islamic state in Egypt, Sheikh Abdul Rahman said that "everything is prepared and everything is ready," for a Muslim government which he said would be ruled by "divine law."

He said the Western world and the United States in particular should not oppose such a system.

LETTERS

Private schools

'Win some, lose some'

To the Editor:

ASSOCIATED AS I am with a fee-paying albeit non profit making school, some might consider it impudent of me to enter into the current discussion on the advisability of inviting government intervention in the administration of private schools. But having been asked for my views by so many, I felt it appropriate to answer through your columns.

Every school, private or state, should maintain the highest ethical standards in all its dealings. However, too much government involvement could prove pernicious to the whole fabric of a balanced, democratic society in which freedom of choice must prevail.

I would therefore suggest that concerned parents, who at present feel they have no choice other than to support the private sector in education, prevail upon their M.P.s and relevant authorities to demand that the standards and facilities of state schools reflect the desires and aspirations of the whole spectrum of our society.

I would welcome a Jordan in which private schooling becomes almost obsolete as is the case in say, France, Scandinavia, and Holland. On the other hand though, I have to remind people that all those countries have very high levels of taxation and in the main, rather small families.

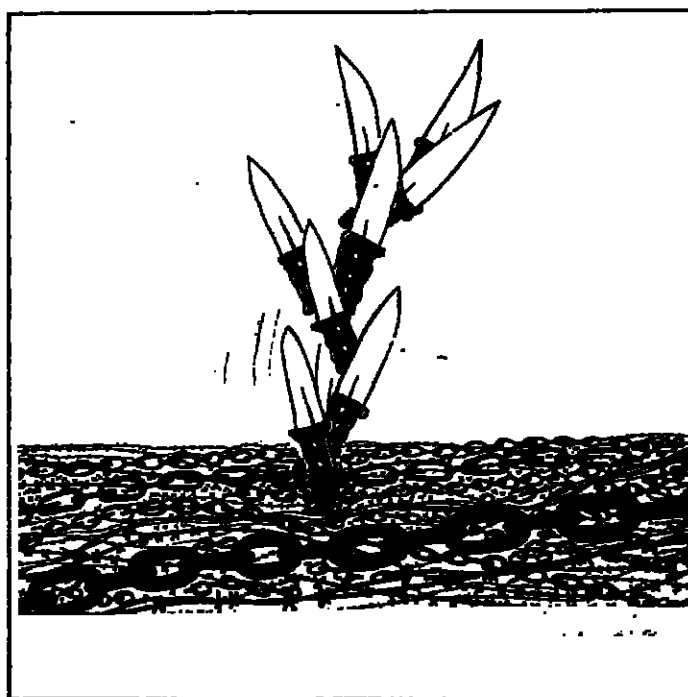
Unfortunately, you win some, you lose some!

Sarvath El Hassan

The week in print

Israel's language of death

Reviewed by Elia Nasrallah



99 per cent of the cards were held by the United States, which wields power over Israel and can force the Jewish state to act according to Washington's desires. The writer said that it is feared that the U.S. will now exercise pressure on Israel to withdraw from the lands of yet another Arab country in order to bring about another separate treaty with the Arabs.

Ahmad Al Miskeh, a columnist in Al Ra'i drew attention to a recent statement by Mr. Rabin in which he said he would like to see no Palestinian taking part in the

peace negotiations. To follow up on his statement, the Israeli prime minister leaked news about alleged Israeli-Syrian agreement over the withdrawal from the Golan, the writer said. This, he said, coincided — not surprisingly — with a visit to Israel by Osama Al Baz, the Egyptian presidential advisor who announced that Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak will go to Israel soon. What is clear here is a determined attitude on the part of the Israeli government to reach a treaty with Syria like it did with Egypt through the Camp David talks,

and by doing so, Mr. Rabin is hoping to keep the Palestinians out in the dark.

With reference to the situation in Iraq, Taher Al Udwan, a columnist in Al Dustour, said it is time for the Arabs to turn to their domestic affairs and discuss ways to restore solidarity among themselves in the face of the looming dangers threatening the whole Arab Nation.

The writer said that Mr. Christopher had discussed the Iraqi question with the leaders of Arab countries he had visited recently and it was clear that the Clinton administration was conducting a reassessment of the situation and its position towards Iraq in the light of Mr. Christopher's tour. He said that much depends on the Arabs themselves, because they have the power to convince the United States to terminate the sanctions on the Iraqi people.

Farouk Al Sharaa, the Syrian foreign minister, has recently stressed his country's total objection to, and resistance of any moves to partition Iraq, said Salameh Ekour in Sawt Al Shaab. Such a statement, coming in the wake of the Western coalition's drive to separate the northern and southern parts of Iraq from the centre, was of paramount importance, he said.

The writer said Mr. Sharaa's statement is a very important step on the part of Syria to expose the coalition's conspiracy against the Arab country, added the writer.

Tareq Masarweh criticised the United States for warning American citizens in Jordan against "heightened" terrorist threats. Any American citizen is more

safe in Amman than he could be in New York, Washington or Los Angeles, said the writer. As we had demanded from the Jordanian government to make strong representations with the United States over its continued siege of Aqaba, we are demanding that the government reply strongly to this warning, he said.

In the view of Khaled Mahad, a columnist in Al Ra'i, the U.S. State Department's warning to American citizens in Jordan could have been a way for covering up for what is happening in Egypt where fundamentalists have been attacking foreign tourists. The writer said that there is no doubt that the U.S. State Department intended to cause harm to our country and our tourism industry by issuing such a statement only a few days after the U.S. ambassador here said in a lecture that Jordan has constantly protected the safety of all its foreign visitors.

Commenting on the spate of recent crimes in Jordan, Mohammad Ibrahim Daoud said in Al Dustour that nothing like unemployment and poverty can drive people to committing crimes. Therefore, said the writer, it is unreasonable at all to see Jordan still hosting tens of thousands of Jordanians find no work and no decent way of making a living.

Mohammad Kawash, a columnist in Al Dustour, criticised the government for trying to solve the problem of unemployment by employing new people. By appointing new workers in government offices, the government would have to increase taxes on the people in order to collect funds to pay the new employees' wages, he said.

The writer suggested that the government cooperate with the private sector to help solve the problem and find work for Jordanians and not guest workers.

Jordanians file for Gulf compensation

(Continued from page 1)

Ministry of Labour for accepting applications infuriated returnees who pointed out that it was inconsistent with the Geneva deadline, which is July 1, 1993.

Mohammed Abdul Hadi Al Akel of the Ministry of Labour says the ministry will now accept applications as long as the commission in Geneva is willing to take them. Charged with handling the returnee compensation claims, Mr. Akel says the ministry has staff working around the clock to help with the application forms.

The 91,550 claims that have been made thus far fall into six categories.

The first, known as Form A, is a claim for departure compensation of \$2,500 for an individual and \$4,000 for family. A higher amount is paid to those who agree not to file for compensation for any other losses. Individuals are entitled to claim \$4,000 and families up to \$8,000 in this category.

Altogether 58,000 people have filed Form A claims with a total claim of \$285 million.

Form B means a claim of compensation for personal injuries, torture in particular. Personal injury as well as psychological effects resulting from rape or witnessing murders and other crimes are included in this category. While the compensation in this category varies on the type of personal or psychological injury, about 650 people have applied in Form B, according to the Ministry of Labour.

The combined amount of Form B compensation claims is \$5 million.

Form C incorporates losses of all personal and private business ventures worth less than \$100,000. Losses suffered by "unincorporated" partnerships must in principle be claimed jointly by all partners. Thus far 32,000 Form C applications — worth \$1 billion — have been given to the Ministry of Labour.

Because Kuwaiti law allowed only Kuwaitis to own business, all Jordanians and Palestinians had

Kuwaiti counterparts who were patrons and majority shareholders. Sometimes they were partners in name only and had no personal investments in the given businesses and companies whatsoever.

Form D encompasses almost a dozen categories from compensation for being taken hostage, to losing a parent, child or spouse and property, income, savings and business loss. This category is considered to be the compensation claim for losses exceeding \$100,000. Thus far 650 applications for compensation under the terms of Form D have been given to the Ministry of Labour, with a total claim of \$1 billion.

Companies can file their compensation in Form E. Some 250 company owners have applied for compensation, with a total claim of \$500 million.

The Jordanian government has also applied for compensation for damages of its property and interests in Kuwait. The Ministry of Labour gave the Jordan Times no exact figure except to say it was below \$4 billion.

The Ministry of Labour says that 99 per cent of forms A, B and C have been compiled and sent to Geneva and that the "larger" compensation claims in Form D and E are still being compiled.

Mr. Oteibi says that Forms D and E need special attention "because there are so many more details that need to be checked in the larger claims."

The money for compensation is expected to come from Iraqi oil sales and frozen assets. Iraqi nationals are specifically excluded from applying for compensation. Even those who lived in Kuwait for decades are barred from applying for compensation.

Compensation Form C specifically says, "Claims will not be considered on behalf of Iraqi nationals who do not have bona fide nationality of another state."

A U.N. proposal that Iraq sell \$1.6 billion of its oil, includes a clause which would draw on almost one third of that amount for the U.N. compensation fund. Iraq has thus far refused to go along with this proposal.

Self-censorship is a reality in Jordan

(Continued from page 1)

Journalists are unaware of what can and cannot be published. Many are not trained in ethics, and therefore they fail to understand what is fair-play, explained the journalist, adding that this compels reporters to censor sensitive material from the outset.

Many journalists believe that all forms of censorship should be abolished. They believe that the new press and publication draft law, which forbids reporting on numerous institutions and topics, is as restrictive as the old law. Yet officials working with the press maintain that censorship is necessary to ensure that press freedom is not abused.

"It's like the law of traffic," explained Issa Jahmani, director of the Press and Publications Department. "When you pass the red light, you do harm to others."

Yet if journalists seem cynical about the lack of changes in the field, their performance is also the target of much criticism. Editors, trained journalists and senior press officials claim that the vast majority of Jordanian journalists are unqualified. Some of these critics believe that a certain level of censorship is required in the absence of professionalism and training.

Due to lack of training, experience and understanding of the profession, many reporters do not know how to approach a news item, Mr. Sharif said. While journalists do admit that training and education is in many cases not up to the necessary professional standards, some say that this should not be used as an excuse for enforcing stringent censorship measures.

"Most journalists aren't well-trained," agreed one freelancer. "But this is also used as an alibi by the government" to support the need for extensive censorship practices, the reporter added. "We can't expect substantial change from the journalists," she added, explaining that the majority of reporters are the

same ones that were writing before the democratic tide.

While journalists debate whether their situation has improved since the democratisation process began, those discredited with the standard of professionalism maintain that reporters themselves are largely responsible for the lack of advancement in their work.

"Some journalists are trying to change," said an editor of a daily. "But they don't have the means, guts and education to break out of the pre-1989 structures," he explained, adding that "this doesn't mean the government forces them to stick to the old clichés."

In addition, sources critical of journalists argue that reporters have misunderstood the meaning of democracy and freedom of expression. They maintain that if not edited, journalists would produce sloppy and careless work.

"Some journalists think that democracy means the right to criticise. But they don't know how to get the facts," a chief editor said. "They want to use democracy without thorough research and without being legal minded," he added.

According to another editor, it is difficult to determine when a reporter is basing an item on fact or opinion. "There is no separation between news items, analysis and opinion," the editor said. Too often the lines are blurred, he explained. "One single article usually contains news, analysis and opinion, and the reader has no way of knowing which is which," he added.

Yet if the amount of criticism levelled against censorship seems abundant, most reporters, nevertheless, also expressed a measure of optimism about the future of the press. "The democratic process is still new," said a reporter who began working for the press during the liberalisation era. Journalists need to be given a chance to practice without a heavy dose of censorship, the journalist said, adding, "understanding what it (democracy) means is a process, and we are just at the beginning of that process."

Snags hit Afghan peace agreement

(Continued from page 1)

Most of the rival leaders, allies in the 14-year war of resistance, rested on the Friday weekend but were to meet to break their daily Ramadan fast at the presidential palace before resuming talks in the evening.

They edged closer to an accord after three days of negotiations to try to end the factional battles that have killed and injured thousands of civilians since the Mujahideen took power from the former communist government last April.

Most parties have agreed to accept fundamentalist President Burhanuddin Rabbani as head of state for the next 18 months while his arch enemy, the hardline Hekmatyar, takes the post of prime minister.

"I accept the president for 18 months if it is ensured that elections for parliament are held within eight months," Mr. Hekmatyar said.

He ruled out allowing Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Masood, the most powerful commander in Mr. Rabbani's party, to retain his portfolio.

By Eric Watkins

Yemen's riots prompt talk of reform

THE YEMENI government continues to occupy a precarious position in the wake of riots, bombs and assassination attempts last December. And, with the economy still on a downward slide, that position looks set to become even more precarious in the coming months.

But seemingly undaunted by their situation, Yemeni officials continue to exude an air of optimism as the country prepares for its first national elections in April. "No one," says Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Idrisi, "can deny that Yemen's future will be prosperous."

Perhaps not. But then again no one can affirm that Yemen's present is anything like prosperous either.

Dr. Idrisi has it just about right when he says that "conditions now are due primarily to the consequences of the Gulf crisis". Certainly the expulsion of a million Yemenis from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states has had a disastrous effect on the economy, depriving it of substantial remittance earnings and adding the burden of so many extra mouths to feed. Indeed, a year after the September 1990 expulsions, unemployment stood at 36 per cent. Little wonder there were riots in Sana'a less than a month later.

But the riots which erupted last December in Ta'izz cannot be attributed entirely or even mostly to consequences of the Gulf crisis. Since September 1990 the

government has aggressively marketed rights to some 20 oil concessions, bringing in an estimated \$800m in hard currency. To its credit it has used the income mostly to good advantage by controlling the slide of the rial and stabilising inflation. But that policy faltered in August 1992 when the rial suddenly began to nose-dive and inflation to soar. By Dec. 9, when the riots broke out in Ta'izz, the rial had already lost 50 per cent of its value.

Remarkably the government initially failed to acknowledge the economic causes of the disturbances. Within hours of the riot's eruption, Sana'a Radio broadcast a statement from the Presidential Council denouncing the events as "irresponsible and unpatriotic" and stressing the right of "people to express themselves in a peaceful, democratic and civilised manner".

Sana'a Radio continued its criticism the following day with quotations from the official press which hinted at a "secret conspiracy" behind the riots, a conspiracy aimed at destroying national unity.

But economic issues soon began to enter government statements. On Dec. 12, the deputy minister of information acknowledged "price rises" as a factor and went on to say that the country had been especially strained "by the return of some 1.5m expatriates after the Gulf war". Though his figures were

somewhat inflated, the deputy minister was at least on the right track about jobs and prices.

Yemen's President Council and ministers were also arriving at the same conclusion. On Dec. 13, the cabinet met to discuss the riots and forwarded recommendations to the Presidential Council proposing measures to "achieve security, improve living conditions, consolidate the capabilities of the national economy, augment and improve public revenues and expedite the process of national reform and reconstruction".

And in a joint meeting on Dec. 15, the council and the cabinet approved the recommendations which, they said, "proposed ways of gradually tackling the current economic situation in a way to reduce the budget deficit, increase revenues, and curb inflation". According to Prime Minister Haidar Abu Baker Al Attas, they were fine words but a year too late.

Mr. Attas made his views clear in a subsequent letter to the Presidential Council. Referring to the riots as "constituting an alarm for all sides", he went on to discuss the government's efforts in confronting the falling economy and said it had decided "the major means to tackle this situation was to approve what we refused to approve during the joint meeting of the Presidential Council and the cabinet at the end of 1991, and to implement the decisions which were not implemented as a result of the poli-

tical atmosphere which prevailed in 1992".

They were critical words. But more critical still was the blame Mr. Attas placed on the ruling parties — the General Peoples' Congress (GPC) and the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP) — for failing to cooperate with each other.

"The deterioration of the economic situation," he said, "reached a climax when differences between the GPC and YSP contributed towards the splitting of political parties and organisations into two groups."

The prime minister continued that "this has led to the fragmentation of the positions of the political parties, popular organisations and trade unions". Concluding his line of thought, Mr. Attas asserted that "these situations have, objectively, paved the way for erroneous actions and behaviour and for all the damage these could cause to the economic, social and political situation". Thus, for Mr. Attas, it was political and economic mismanagement — and not the Gulf crisis — which led to the December riots.

From a member of the Yemeni government, Mr. Attas' words were a startling admission of responsibility and, for the most part, they fit the facts. In August the rial began its decline, terrorist attacks increased and inflation rose sharply. Political differences between the GPC and YSP doubtless led to increased tension throughout the country and to a degree of political fragmentation as well. But the riots in Ta'izz sprang from economic causes: from the continuing decline of the economy after the Gulf war and from the failure of the government to do much about it.

But more to the point is the commonly held view that a corrupt government has siphoned off the country's new oil revenues for its own purposes. That view, together with underlying economic frustration, was what triggered the riots.

The programme of reform and

reconstruction now proposed by the government may well bring economic benefits. In the short term, fiscal responsibility on the government's part will perhaps reduce public hostility and that turn may improve the climate for investment.

Towards that end, the government has long since passed a new investment law which may prove attractive to foreign capital. In the longer term, Yemen does have reasonable prospects, especially as the country's new found reserves of oil and natural gas come on stream in commercial quantities. Oil production now running at just under 190,000 barrels per day, is set to rise by 120,000 bpd in September when Canadian Occidental Masila fields come into production. That increase will not turn the country into an oil state, but will at least make an improvement. And, with exploration continuing apace, there could be larger discoveries yet in the future.

But for the meantime Yemen will indeed have to cope with adversity.

Middle East International

Police expect more arrests in bombing

(Continued from page 1)

about the motive for the bombing, saying Salameh had only tenuous links to extremist groups.

Reports conflicted over the nationality of the suspect. Some said he was Egyptian and others said he was a Palestinian. Yet some other reports said he was born in Jordan.

Commissioner Kelly said Salameh's citizenship was still in doubt and investigators are looking into the issue.

Shortly after Salameh's arrest, police investigating the blast searched the apartment formerly occupied by Mr. Sayid Nosair, who was convicted of weapons charges and assault in the killing of Jewish extremist Rabbi Meir Kahane, police sources said.

Nosair was tried but found innocent of Kahane's murder. While searching, they arrested the current occupant, Nosair's cousin, Ibrahim Al Gabrowny, on charges of obstruction, the sources said.

Both Nosair and Salameh prayed at a mosque in nearby Jersey City which has become a focal point for Muslim fundamentalists in the area.

Among the preachers has been Sheikh Abdul Rahman. The sheikh, who lives in Jersey City with his three wives, is facing deportation from the United States.

The sheikh, 54, is the spiritual

leader of an Islamic fundamentalist movement responsible for a wave of violent attacks that have shaken the Egyptian government, including attacks and foreign tourists.

The sheikh's followers in Egypt, known as the Islamic Group, are seeking to set up a fundamentalist state.

Mr. Kelly speculated that Salameh might have assumed the van had been completely destroyed in the blast when he decided to try to get the money back.

Details of the complaint against Salameh pointed to him as the builder of the massive bomb that blasted a 30-metre wide hole in an underground parking garage of the world's second tallest building.

The complaint said that tools and parts were found at an apartment Salameh used and that a police expert said they were evidence of a "bomb maker".

U.S. District Judge Richard Owen ordered Salameh held without bail.

He said that Salameh could face the death penalty, although prosecutors said after the hearing that it was not clear if the death penalty applied in this case.

The federal complaint against Salameh charges that he "did aid and abet the damage of the World Trade Centre complex by use of an explosive device causing the death of at least five indi-

viduals."

Gilmore Childers, assistant U.S. attorney, characterised the bombing as "the single most destructive act of terrorism on American soil."

Robert Precht, Salameh's court-appointed attorney, said his client was innocent and asked that his client be released on \$5 million bail, but the judge refused.

"Obviously the hysteria that is surrounding this case was in evidence at the hearing," he told reporters after the arraignment.

Salameh appeared relaxed in federal court as the charges were read to him in Arabic by an interpreter. The slight, bearded man, dressed in a gray jogging suit, nodded to his court-appointed lawyer, but did not address the court.

If convicted, he faces life in prison. A hearing was scheduled for March 10.

In Cairo, an Egyptian lawyer said Friday he thought he had seen Salameh at the trial of Nosair in New York in late 1991.

Muntazer Al Zayyat, one of a team of lawyers who successfully defended Nosair, against charges of killing Kahane, told Reuters. "When I was going to court for the defence, there was a group of young Arabs who always attended. I think there was someone called Mohammad Salameh but I cannot be sure without seeing his photograph."

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JORDAN MARKET PLACE

France's Suez banking group dives into first ever loss

PARIS (R) — French diversified banking group CIE de Suez has reported the first loss in its 135-year history as huge property provisions drove it deeply into the red.

Suez, founded in 1858 to help finance the building of the Suez Canal, estimated its 1992 net loss after minority interests at 1.8 to 1.9 billion francs (\$320 to \$340 million), compared with 1991's 3.83 billion francs (\$685 million) profit.

The company, whose business is split roughly one-third each between banking, insurance and industrial activities, said that real estate losses and provisions had a negative impact of 4.2 billion francs (\$752 million).

"It's absolutely staggering,"

said Ian Furnivall at Kleinwort Benson in Paris. "It's a reflection of a lack of control over property investment over the last 10 years."

He said Suez management was trying to convince the market that it had now made provisions for all of its potential losses on property. But he added that it was hard for outsiders to unravel just how much property exposure the sprawling group had.

Prior to 1992, the company's worst performance ever was in 1974, when it reported a net profit of 234 million francs (\$42 million).

Suez said its net dividend payout for 1992 was unchanged at 8.20 francs.

Barclays announces first loss in its 97 year history

LONDON (AP) — Barclays PLC, the giant British banking group, said Thursday it lost £285 (\$413.3 million) last year, as bad lending decisions contributed to the company's first loss in 97 years of banking.

The loss compared with a net profit of £296 million in 1991 and was attributed to one time writeoffs on bad loans and money set aside to pay for staff reductions.

Chairman Andrew Buxton acknowledged poor lending decisions

contributed to Barclays' troubles which have been aggravated by Britain's longest recession since World War II.

Mr. Buxton told a news conference that the careers of some Barclays staffers had suffered because of their bad decisions, but he declined to name names or elaborate.

Mr. Buxton said the bank's problems prompted it to cut its per-share dividend by 28 per cent to 15.15 pence (22.12 cents).

The Banking Insurance and Finance Union said Barclays' losses were the result of "monumental incompetence over a long period." Many of the bad loans were for property development in London and were made when the Bank of England was warning commercial banks against becoming over-extended in the market.

The loss at Barclays was worse than securities analysts had forecast.

Britain stops propping up former millionaires

LONDON (R) — Britain has clamped down on mortgage subsidies for unemployed home owners following public anger at reports that taxpayers were financing former millionaires to carry on living in mansions.

The government said it would limit subsidies for out-of-work homeowners to those with mortgages of £150,000 (\$214,100) and under, falling to £125,000 (\$178,400) next year.

"Why should the taxpayer keep a former millionaire in his mansion? The system was never intended to bail out the super-rich on mega-mortgages who made no provision against tough times," said Social Security Secretary Peter Lilley.

British newspapers have reported several cases of huge government benefit payments being made to former business executives who bought large houses on credit before losing their jobs in the country's recession.

In one highly publicised case, tabloid said a man who lost his job as chief executive of an insurance company was having mortgage interest of £1,833 (\$2,616) a week paid by the Social Security Department.

Further falls likely Bundesbank cuts key market rate

FRANKFURT (R) — The Bundesbank announced a surprise cut in a key German money market interest rate Friday just a day after it had left its official Lombard and discount lending rates unchanged.

Economists said the unexpectedly sharp reduction in the German central bank's "security repurchase rate" to 8.25 per cent from 8.49 — had brought the timing of an official rate cut closer.

"The probability of a cut increases with each (Bundesbank Council) meeting," said Rainer Schroeder at Dresdner International Advisers. "The question is not whether, but when."

With the mark the key currency in the European Community's currency grid, monetary authorities throughout Europe have been waiting for further reductions in German interest rates to allow them to follow suit and give depressed economies a boost.

The central bank said it would offer funds to the money market next week at an interest rate of 8.25 per cent, well below the 8.49 per cent set on a similar transaction this week.

Prices of German bonds, which are particularly sensitive to interest rate moves, surged on the news. Bond futures prices leapt by half a percentage point.

Most market analysts are now tipping March 18, the next scheduled meeting of the Bundesbank's policy-making council, as the most likely time for a cut in the nine per cent Lombard emergency lending rate and eight per cent discount rate.

But, signalling the significance on Friday's move, the chief executive of Germany's largest bank said the Bundesbank had already chosen to cut the most important of its range of interest rates.

Deutsche Bank's Hilmar Kopper told reporters in Frankfurt: "What they have done this morning has relevance in the market place and this is what counts."

The securities repurchase rate is the price for funds which the Bundesbank feeds to the German banking system every week and is crucial for the guidance of money market rates which determine capital flows on the world's financial markets.

The Lombard rate, at nine per cent, is well above the market rate and only has relevance in as far as it is an emergency source of funds to banks seeking to cover day-to-day shortages.

It usually forms a ceiling for money market rates, while the discount rate — at which the central bank discounts bills of exchange — forms the floor.

Camdessus urges quick end to world trade talks

BRUSSELS (R) — A rapid and successful end to the six-year-old round of GATT talks to liberalise world trade is the key to global prosperity, International Monetary Fund Managing Director Michel Camdessus said Thursday.

"From the point of view of the world economy as a whole the prime imperative today is the conclusion, without delay, of the Uruguay Round," Mr. Camdessus told Belgian think-tank The Grand Conference Catholique.

"Governments can neither afford to miss the chance nor give in to protectionist pressures," he said.

Mr. Camdessus, who earlier in Paris urged France to sign the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) despite its objections to a deal between the European Community and the United States on oilseed trade, warned that holding out for a perfect deal was irrational and dangerous.

"Without doubt no country or special interest group can get everything they want from these negotiations," he said, adding that holding out for a deal that was perfect in every respect risked failure and a return to protectionism.

An accord that drew nations together, despite its imperfections, was the key to rekindled economic growth throughout the world, he added.

Mr. Camdessus said that the Group of Seven industrialised nations — the United States, Canada, Japan, Britain, France, Germany and Italy — also had an important role to play.

"Strategies are one thing, their application is another," Mr. Camdessus said, adding that too many governments were making sweeping statements on growth-promoting plans, but too few of them were putting them into practice.

He said world economic growth was likely to be only 1.5 to two per cent this year, with that in the European Community (EC) barely positive and at best less than one per cent.

But, Mr. Camdessus added, all was not gloom. The world was faced with the best combination of opportunities since World War II.

African governments seen lukewarm on trade area

NAIROBI (R) — Africa's 12-year-old Preferential Trade Area (PTA) has failed to grow into a powerful economic bloc because of a lack of will among member governments, bankers and investors have said.

"It is clear that to breathe new life into the PTA, one would have to begin by breathing new life into the member states," Ahmad Abdallah, executive chairman of the Kenya Commercial Bank, told a conference of bankers and investors.

The 20-member PTA, based in eastern and southern Africa, was set up to boost inter-African commerce.

But in 1988, the last date for which figures are available, the value of intra-PTA trade amounted to \$80 million, or 15 per cent of total trade of member states. The remainder was primarily with Europe, North America or Asia.

"So far, for every dollar PTA states have traded amongst themselves, they have traded \$7 with countries outside their economic bloc," Mr. Abdallah said.

He said PTA member states suffered from budgetary and balance-of-payments problems, unenlightened leadership, external political interference and rivalry among themselves.

Namibian Trade and Industry Minister Ben Amathila said poor transport and communication infrastructure impeded trade flows within the region of about 240 million people.

Mr. Amathila said there was also an uneven distribution of trade costs and benefits such that

the rich states grew richer and the poor got poorer or stagnated.

Mr. Abdallah said African economies had performed poorly in international trade and had become dependent on massive food and cash aid from the West — yet they had failed to identify what each state produced to enhance

regional goods-sharing. "In the last 20 years the continent has lost the capacity to feed itself and lost market share in the international market in nearly every commodity in which it previously held a leading position," Mr. Abdallah said.

He urged PTA states to create a trade settlement facility to help

settle deficits by trading partners because many PTA members faced persistent hard currency shortages.

One conference delegate urged countries with net surplus within the region to buy goods and services from countries in deficit and richer PTA members to inject more capital resources to the organisation.

PTA states also must produce tradeable goods. They must work towards growth of their economies because there will no economic giant unless one state comes out clearly to be the locomotive of development," the delegate said.

Financial Markets

Jordan Times in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close 3/3/93	Tokyo Close 4/3/93
Sterling Pound	1.4505	1.4475
Deutsche Mark	1.6454	1.6468
Swiss Franc	1.5228	1.5237
French Franc	5.5835	5.5920**
Japanese Yen	116.69	116.98
European Currency Unit	1.1793	1.1785**

USD Per STD
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AMMAN EDUCATIONAL BANK

AMMAN RESEARCH BANK

AMMAN INNOVATION BANK

AMMAN DESIGN BANK

AMMAN ARCHITECTURE BANK

AMMAN ENGINEERING BANK

AMMAN MANUFACTURING BANK

AMMAN CONSTRUCTION BANK

AMMAN TRADING BANK

AMMAN DISTRIBUTION BANK

AMMAN RETAIL BANK

AMMAN WHOLESALE BANK

AMMAN IMPORT BANK

AMMAN EXPORT BANK

AMMAN LOGISTICS BANK

AMMAN SUPPLY BANK

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AMMAN CREDIT BANK

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AMMAN SETTLEMENT BANK

AMMAN CLEARING BANK

AMMAN COLLATERAL BANK

AMMAN GUARANTEE BANK

AMMAN INSURANCE BANK

AMMAN REINSURANCE BANK

AMMAN RISK BANK

AMMAN LOSS BANK

AMMAN GAIN BANK

AMMAN PROFIT BANK

AMMAN LOSS BANK

AMMAN GAIN BANK

AMMAN PROFIT BANK

AMMAN LOSS BANK

AMMAN GAIN BANK

AMMAN PROFIT BANK

CAB Indices for Amman Financial Market

Index 2/3/1993 Close 3/3/1993 Close

All-Share 189.90 190.25

Banking Sector 132.39 132.56

Insurance Sector 217.25 212.07

Industry Sector 269.71 270.29

Services Sector 248.09 248.36

December 31, 1990 = 100

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U.N. mediators see possible break-through in Bosnia talks

UNITED NATIONS (R) — After months of negotiations, international mediators hope Bosnia's Muslim government will agree to a controversial provincial map, the key to an overall peace package.

Sources close to the talks said Bosnia's President Alija Izetbegovic was likely to sign the proposal that divides the republic into 10 semi-autonomous provinces, based partly on ethnic lines.

Should this occur, the mediators will have isolated Bosnian Serbs as the only one of the three parties not to have accepted all three major provisions of the plan drawn up by U.N. envoy Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen of the European Community.

Apparently, the strategy of Western Security Council members then would be to put pressure on Bosnian Serb allies in Serbia by imposing new sanctions against Belgrade and enlisting further Russian support.

At the same time, key envoys suspect the United States has been instrumental in convincing Mr. Izetbegovic he needs to negotiate seriously on the map.

"There is some progress," Mr. Izetbegovic told reporters late Thursday after negotiations with Mr. Vance and Lord Owen during a day of talks with U.S. mediator Richard Holbrooke and members of the Security Council.

"I am hopeful," Mr. Vance said when asked if he was optimistic Mr. Izetbegovic would sign the map soon.

Lord Owen, who acknowledged the possibility of a Muslim deal, was asked what had caused the change of heart hours after the talks appeared on the verge of collapse.

"Maybe when people look over the brink and they see a continuing war and they see very

little chance of getting the negotiations easily restarted, they face up to the reality."

"There is a comprehensive package here on offer and that comprehensive package can bring an end to the war," he said.

Meanwhile U.S. planes delivering aid to Bosnia may fly at lower altitudes to improve accuracy, although they may then expose themselves to missile or anti-aircraft fire from the ground, military sources said Friday.

The sources, who asked not to be identified, said the U.S. Air Force was considering the move because much of the aid dropped so far from high altitude had been inaccurate.

"I hope you will see in the near future that we will use other techniques to deliver," NATO's top commander in Europe, U.S. General John Shalikashvili, told reporters Thursday.

His spokesman said Gen. Shalikashvili had declined to give further details. But other military sources contacted by Reuters said the United States was considering dropping the aid from lower levels to improve the accuracy.

The planes so far had been flying above 10,000 feet (3,000 metres), out of the range of most anti-aircraft weapons and missiles, the sources said.

"Flying lower means the planes could drop with more precision but it will be riskier," said one source. "They are in the process of weighing up those risks now."

The United States has not said what it would do if any of its aid planes were shot down, nor has it given official details of the flights' altitudes so far.

Four U.S. Air Force C-130 cargo planes returned to base in Germany safely Friday after dropping food and medical supplies over eastern Bosnia for a fifth successive night, the U.S.

European Command said. A command spokesman said he was not aware of any major changes to the aid mission.

But he added: "Every mission is different. It would be a mistake to assume that just because we have a way of doing these things that every flight is done in exactly the same way. Procedures are not locked in concrete."

Friday's flights raised the total U.S. aid parachuted over eastern Bosnia since Sunday night to 101 tonnes of food, or 93,312 individual meals, and 2.8 tonnes of medical supplies.

U.S. officials say many packs of food and medicine dropped near the Muslim enclaves of Cerska, Zepa and Konjic since Sunday had not been picked up by their intended recipients because of rough terrain, snow, fighting or inaccuracy.

Russia is planning to join the United States in parachuting food and medicine into former Yugoslavia, but Washington's NATO allies have been more reluctant.

The U.N. military commander in Bosnia and a senior aid official were trying to enter the blocked Muslim enclave of Cerska Friday although their mission was not authorised by Serb forces, a U.N. spokesman said.

General Philippe Morillon, head of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia and UNHCR official Larry Hollingsworth travelled from their base in the Bosnian capital Sarajevo.

U.N. spokesman Commander Barry Frewer said they flew to Zepa by helicopter and would try to cross Serb lines by road in order to reach Cerska 100 kilometres to the southeast.

Bosnia's Muslim-led government told the UNHCR this week that Serb forces had entered Cerska which is claimed for hold

20,000 Muslims besieged by Serbs since civil war began nearly a year ago.

The fall of the mountain settlement has not been independently confirmed and the Bosnian Serb army has refused to allow international agencies or journalists to enter the region.

A UNHCR official in Zagreb said Serb authorities had been informed of the joint UNPROFOR and UNHCR mission but had not approved it.

U.N. negotiators and Serb authorities have provisionally agreed to open corridors from Cerska and the nearby Muslim enclaves of Zepa and Srebrenica for 24 hours this weekend to allow Muslims to escape to Tuzla.

In a separate development, Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic Thursday retracted a statement suggesting U.S. air-drops for besieged Bosnian Muslims could trigger terrorist reprisals, like the bombing of New York's World Trade Centre.

In a recent "open letter to the American people" he said the "tragic and deplorable terrorist incident at the World Trade Centre is fresh testimony to the extraordinary volatility and immediate dangers of direct foreign involvement."

U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali protested the remark when he, Mr. Vance and Lord Owen held a "very tough meeting" with Mr. Karadzic Thursday about the fighting in Bosnia.

"The secretary-general and his colleagues protested very strongly at this statement and Dr. Karadzic indicated that he will retract this statement," a U.N. spokesman said.

In Washington, Secretary of State Warren Christopher said the United States would not let fears of terrorism keep it from carrying out its policies in the former Yugoslavia.



U.S. Air Force photographer Staff Sgt. Michael C. Funk (left) is assisted by Staff Sgt. Gregory L. Herrow as they prepare to videotape the fourth airdrop of food and medical aid over eastern Bosnia (AFP photo)

Khasbulatov rejects Yeltsin plan

MOSCOW (R) — Parliament Chairman Ruslan Khasbulatov Friday blasted President Boris Yeltsin's plan to resolve Russia's power struggle as an ultimatum and said the scope for cooperation was fast diminishing.

Mr. Yeltsin has proposed transferring the vast country's Central Bank from parliamentary to government control and freezing all constitutional changes to try to keep reforms on track and resolve a dispute over who should rule Russia.

But in remarks likely to widen the rift between the conservative legislature and the democratically-elected Yeltsin, Mr. Khasbulatov told parliament: "There cannot be any question of adopting this document, which constitutes an ultimatum."

Mr. Khasbulatov, Mr. Yeltsin's main rival, said he favoured finding a way to cooperate but added: "The basis for cooperation is dramatically narrowing."

"This situation came as a result of extremely aggressive behaviour by the executive authorities," he added, referring to the branch of government headed by Mr. Yeltsin.

"The potential of this authority is almost over and it is trying to destabilise the legislature," said Mr. Khasbulatov, who heads the standing parliament and the conservative-dominated Congress of People's Deputies, Russia's supreme legislature.

Parliament, as expected, voted to summon a meeting of Congress for March 10 to debate the constitutional crisis, which is paralysing that country and undermining Mr. Yeltsin's authority.

Some conservatives are also demanding Mr. Yeltsin's resignation, a move Mr. Yeltsin's supporters are opposing.

Political analysts say Mr. Yeltsin's ability to keep Russia on the path of reform is under increasing threat. A top U.S. intelligence expert said this week the situation was more worrying than at any time since the 1991 Soviet coup.

Mr. Khasbulatov suggested next week's Congress should decide on the constitutional agreement proposed by Mr. Yeltsin.

Mr. Yeltsin has said if parliament rejects his power-sharing deal he will go ahead with a national referendum on April 11 to ask the country's 150 million people who should rule Russia, parliament or president.

But this, too, would require the approval of Congress, where opposition to the plebiscite is strong.

The last Congress, in December, ended in humiliation for Mr. Yeltsin when deputies rejected his favoured candidate for prime minister, radical Yegor Gaidar, in favour of the more conserva-

tive Viktor Chernomyrdin. Nikolai Ryabov, deputy chairman of parliament and head of its negotiating group on the Yeltsin proposals, said the president's latest plan would strip the legislature of power.

"If the Supreme Soviet (parliament) adopts such an agreement it will sign not only its own death warrant but that of the whole emerging legislative system in this country," he said.

Mr. Ryabov said Mr. Yeltsin wanted to amend the constitution because "the president and his team are afraid that under the influence of the worsening economic situation Congress might decide the experience of the presidency was unsuccessful and abandon it."

Congress is theoretically empowered under the constitution to abolish the presidency, and some hardliners have called for Mr. Yeltsin's impeachment.

First Deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Shumeiko, responding to Mr. Ryabov's speech on Mr. Yeltsin's behalf, said the president was prepared to be flexible over the form of the proposed agreement and to form a working group to redraft it.

Meanwhile former U.S. President Richard Nixon wrote in Friday's New York Times that the major foreign policy issue facing President Bill Clinton is the success of political and economic reforms in Russia.

Angolan government may seek foreign military aid

LUANDA, Angola (AP) — After months of renewed fighting that has killed thousands, the government threatened to seek foreign military support if the United Nations did not denounce the UNITA rebels by next week.

Government Gen. Higinio Carneiro said Thursday if the United Nations did not formally support the Angolan government by Tuesday "there will be no alternative but to secure external military assistance," Portuguese News Agency (LUSA) reported.

Earlier Thursday, Foreign Minister Venancio De Moura said the government would appeal directly to the United Nations to repeal the ban on military aid to Angola. He urged the three nations monitoring Angola's failed transition to democracy — the United States, Portugal and Russia — to quickly help defend Angola.

But Jeffrey Davidow, U.S. assistant secretary of state for African affairs, said providing weapons was not even being considered by the three countries.

"We understand the government's great frustration, but it is clear that what Angola needs is peace — not more arms," Mr. Davidow said.

Before peace accords were signed in May 1991, the United States and South Africa supported UNITA — National Un-

ion for the Total Independence of Angola — in its 16 year battle to topple the then-Marxist government, backed by Cuba and the Soviet Union.

The steady flow of weapons turned Angola into a cold war proxy battlefield, killing more than 350,000 people and devastating this once prosperous and fertile southern African nation.

The peace accords called for demobilization of the rebels' army and creation of a unified military, and banned the sale of lethal weapons to Angola until a new government was formed.

Angola's first multiparty elections were held in September, but UNITA leader Joao Savimbi cited fraud and called his rebels back to arms when he and his party lost to the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA).

UNITA quickly seized control of three quarters of the sprawling country.

In response to the government's appeal for help, the World Food Programme has increased supply runs to the estimated 3 million Angolans in danger of starvation, said spokesman Pierre Honnorat.

"But a ceasefire means everything," Mr. Honnorat said. "The two most important areas are Huambo and Kuito, and it is impossible to fly there."

Zulus say no as South African talks resume

JOHANNESBURG (R) — Multi-party negotiations resumed in South Africa Friday with the powerful Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) saying it rejected power-sharing arrangements planned by the white government and the African National Congress (ANC).

"The IFP is not interested in being a party to complex power-sharing arrangements... nor do we desire to have our representatives participate in a so-called government of national unity," it said.

Its statement, and one by the IFP government of KwaZulu tribal homeland, said there would be trouble if the two main players, President F.W. de Klerk's government and National Party and Nelson Mandela's ANC, continued on their present course.

The IFP and KwaZulu also said they wanted the complex issues of regional powers and federalism settled by a multi-party conference rather than by a popularly-elected Constituent Assembly as suggested by the government and the ANC.

The statement repeated Inkatha's known position. But in the context of the renewal of talks after a nine month hiatus caused by chronic township violence, they signalled possible stumbling

blocks ahead. The two-day conference began with a reminder of the warfare tearing apart South Africa's black townships.

Law and Order Minister Hensley Kriel called reporters into a side room and announced three men had been arrested in connection with the killing of six schoolchildren by gunmen in Natal Tuesday.

He said he could not rule out that the murders were politically-related but refused to point a finger, particularly at any of the participants in the negotiations. Inkatha has accused the ANC of complicity the ANC denies involvement.

Nobel Peace Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu and government officials have voiced suspicions the killings might have been aimed at derailing the talks.

Twenty-six black and white groups gathered at the World Trade Centre near Johannesburg International Airport in the most representative conference of its kind in South Africa's three-year transition from apartheid to democracy.

Organisations ranged from the pro-apartheid white Conservative Party through traditional tribal leaders to the black radical Pan Africanist Congress (PAC).

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. cult siege continues

WACO, Texas (AP) — Federal agents have recovered a body found near the police encircled compound of a heavily armed religious cult, and the cult released another one of their children. That makes a total of 20 children and two adults released so far. FBI special agent Jeff Jamar said. The child was believed to be the older brother of a boy who left Wednesday night, said Francesca Perot, spokeswoman for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Negotiators continued trying to resolve the standoff. Eighteen children, 47 women and 43 men remained in the Mount Carmel compound of the branch Davidian Sect. Federal agents raided the compounds Sunday in an attempt to arrest sect leader David Koresh. They pulled back after four agents were killed and 16 were wounded. A federal source speaking on condition of anonymity said that at least 10 cultists had been killed. Mr. Jamar said a helicopter survey had located the body of an unidentified man in a wooded area on the 77 acre (31 hectare) compound, about 350 metres from the buildings where the cultists live. Officers in two armoured personnel carriers recovered the body Thursday and took it to a forensic lab in Fort Worth, officials said.

U.K., China 'not ready' for talks

HONG KONG (R) — Saying Britain and China were still unable to set a date for talks, Governor Chris Patten Friday delayed legislation on democratic reforms for a fourth time in the hope the two sides can negotiate. High tension in the colony's legislature and financial markets, which were hoping for news of a breakthrough in the months-old deadlock with Peking, eased as it became clear the long wait would go on. "There remain only a few points of disagreement (between Britain and China) which could and should be resolved," Mr. Patten told Hong Kong's Legislative Council. "I don't want to sound gloomy, I don't want to sound pessimistic, but these are very difficult matters... I hope that we can approach them in a spirit of realism as well as with such hope as is appropriate in these circumstances," he said.

Swiss to vote on casinos, petrol tax

ZURICH (R) — Swiss voters decide Sunday on controversial proposals to legalise gambling casinos and raise a petrol tax, measures the government sees as vital to control Switzerland's budget deficit. The Swiss will also vote on a proposal for the complete abolition of medical experiments on animals. However, this measure is unlikely to win much support as it is more restrictive than two previous proposals in 1985 and 1992 which were both clearly rejected. The Finance Ministry is grappling with a federal budget deficit of up to five billion Swiss francs (\$3.2 billion) compared to last year's three billion (\$1.97 billion). It says an extra petrol tax of 20 centimes (0.13) per litre is needed to boost state coffers by an annual 1.3 billion francs (\$852.2 million). "The situation of federal finances has deteriorated dramatically since 1991," Finance Minister Otto Stich said earlier this week. "This requires action."

IRA suspects charged

LONDON (R) — Security sources have warned that the IRA might stage a "spectacular" reprisal attack in London after a police swoop on a house in the British capital discovered weapons and explosives. Two suspected Irish guerrillas arrested in the raid were charged Thursday with a bomb attack which injured three people outside Harrods Department Store in January. "What we fear is the backlash reaction of a big spectacular," one security source said. "When terrorists have suffered setbacks like this they will be desperate to do a spectacular and will want to do it in London." The Irish Republican Army (IRA) has fought a long and bitter guerrilla campaign to end British rule in Northern Ireland and the source said history showed that when one team was disrupted another would be activated straight away.

Zambia arrests alleged coup plotters

JOHANNESBURG (R) — Zambian police arrested seven people Friday, including a son of former President Kenneth Kaunda, in connection with an alleged coup plot. Foreign Minister Vernon Mwaanga said. The arrests were announced after President Frederick Chiluba declared a limited state of emergency Thursday night and suggested Iraq and Iran were implicated. Mr. Mwaanga, in a telephone interview from Lusaka, said information received by police from members of the opposition United National Independence Party (UNIP) "indicated the funding for the operation is being obtained from Iraq and Iran." Zambia's relations with the two countries were under review and a decision would be taken next week.

COLUMN

Whitney Houston gives birth to a girl

MENDHAM, New Jersey (AP) — Whitney Houston gave birth to a 6 pound, 12-ounce (3-kilogramme) girl with her husband, fellow singer Bobby Brown, at her side. Ms. Houston and her daughter were resting comfortably, said her spokeswoman, Lisa Mintelmann. She said the baby's name had not yet been chosen. Ms. Houston, 29, and Brown, 24, were married at their home in Mendham last June. Brown said last month he was hoping for a girl and that she would be named Bobbi. Ms. Houston starred in the recent movie "The Bodyguard," and her single from the movie, "I Will Always Love You," was No. 2 on the billboard chart last week. She has two other singles in the top 20. Brown's single, "Get Away," was No. 14. The child was Ms. Houston's first and Brown's fourth.

Agents crack down on hi-tech computerised child porn

MIAMI (R) — Federal agents have conducted a nationwide search for evidence against "computer perverts" who use international computer bulletin boards to traffic in child pornography. U.S. customs officials said. Authorities say people can use computer modems and phone lines to import child pornography from Danish-based bulletin boards. The cutting-edge porn technology enables the users to display the images on computer screens, store them on an ordinary floppy disk, or print them with the quality of a photograph. Several hundred federal agents served 31 search warrants in 15 states and 30 cities as a result of Operation Longarm, the largest-ever anti-child pornography effort mounted by U.S. authorities. Customs officials said they were still going through the evidence. Arrests could be made in the future, after agents examine seized computer records, officials said. At the heart of Operation Longarm was the importation of sexually-explicit pictures of children "hi-tech child pornography coming from foreign countries to the United States through a modem," said customs agent Bill Rosenblatt. "This is digitising photographs, if you will."

China's imperial survivor in hospital

PEKING (R) — China's imperial survivor, the 86-year-old brother of the last emperor, is in hospital, officials said Friday. Officials at the Peking Union Hospital gave new details of Aisin Gioro Pu Jie's illness. One said it was "old age" and not serious and others hung up the phone when asked for information. An official of the Public Health Ministry said special government permission was needed to discuss the case. Mr. Pu Jie, younger brother of China's last emperor and once heir-apparent to the throne of the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo, was last seen in public in October when he met Emperor Akihito, the first Japanese monarch to visit China. Mr. Pu Jie was schooled in Japan and is married to a member of its aristocracy. His eventual life saw him by turn prince, prisoner of war, traitor and now retired scholar.

Man jailed for over 400 years in sex slave case

LOS ANGELES (R) — A man who kidnapped two immigrant women from El Salvador and Guatemala and held them as sex slaves in his caravan was sentenced to more than 400 years, including two life terms, in jail. Paul Garcia, 42, was sentenced to 398 years in prison, plus two consecutive life terms, on 40 counts of kidnapping, imprisonment, slavery, assault and rape. The two women, both seamstresses who had been looking for work in the United States, had testified in Los Angeles Superior Court that Mr. Garcia, and his wife, Emma, had lured them to his camper by promising them work. Once there, they told the court, they were chained, beaten and raped repeatedly. Emma Garcia was not charged in the case. The women testified they were forced to cook, clean and care for the Garcia's four children, and that if they did anything wrong, Mr. Garcia tortured them with "electric sticks, tweezers, fire and needles." The woman from Guatemala, who was 24 when she was kidnapped and enslaved in 1988, told the court she escaped after four months, while the woman from El Salvador, who was 27, was freed for 14 months before she freed herself in 1990 by finding the keys to her handcuffs while everyone else was out of the camper.

Diana holds hands with hospitalised lepers

KATMANDU (AP) — Princess Diana's tour of this Himalayan kingdom took her to a leprosy hospital and she spent an hour holding patients' hands and sharing their woes.

The 110-bed Ananbhan Leprosy Hospital, on the southern edge of Katmandu Valley, is run by Leprosy Mission International, a London-based relief agency that counts Princess Diana as a patron.

The Princess of Wales went through the different wards and chatted with the patients while sitting on the edge of their beds.

"She was well demonstrating that she was not afraid of the disease," the medical superintendent of the hospital, Dr. Ruth Bultin, said. "The princess took interest in each of the individual patients she met."

She also laid a bouquet at a memorial honouring the 167 people, including 34 Britons, who died five months ago when a Pakistan International Airlines jetliner crashed near Katmandu Airport.

Princess Diana walked around the area shaped memorial reading the names, each of which has been carved into a separate marble brick.

She began her four-day visit to Nepal on Tuesday. It is her first trip abroad since she and Prince Charles separated in December.

Earlier Thursday, she visited Bubbhanikhan School, which is modelled on a British school, and formally opened a new dormitory for girls. The school, established in 1972, has 160 students, including 81 girls. Its graduates include Crown Prince Dipendra.

Princess Diana also went to the British Gurkha camp in a suburb of Katmandu where she was greeted by a baggage player. She visited the 253 recruits who recently arrived from the mountains.

Princess Diana toured Mount Everest in a helicopter Wednesday, 40 years after a British expedition became the first to reach the summit of the world's highest mountain.

Major forced on defensive after comment on Thatcher legacy

LONDON (Agencies) — British Prime Minister John Major has been forced onto the defensive after the Labour Party said his criticisms of the 1980s industrial policies of Margaret Thatcher's government were an attack on his predecessor.

John Smith, leader of the opposition Labour Party, in heated parliamentary exchanges Thursday accused Mr. Major of trying to blame Baroness Thatcher for "the abject failure of your government's economic policies."

In an interview with the Independent newspaper published Thursday, Mr. Major said he had never accepted the downgrading of the manufacturing industry in favour of the service sector in the 1980s. This was taken by Labour as an attack on Mrs. Thatcher.

The prime minister's insistence that Mr. Smith had been "misled" by newspaper reports only led to derisive laughter from Labour benches. Mr. Major said: "Lady Thatcher did more to help British industry than the Labour Party has ever done."

Mr. Major's remarks on downgrading manufacturing were: "I don't agree with it. I didn't agree with it in the eighties. I was a minority view in the eighties. I am not a minority view now and anyway I'm in a better position to expound my views."

In parliament Mr. Smith asked: "Can you explain what you meant when you said you were in a minority in Lady Thatcher's administration?" adding the comments were "revealing" ab-

out Mr. Major, treasury secretary and chancellor in Lady Thatcher's team.

Mr. Major retorted: "If you had read the source material you would have seen that the question put to me was that the idea got about in the 1980s that making things was not so important — not my view, not Lady Thatcher's view and not the view of the then government."

In a separate development, Mr. Major has taken a whack at the "yongs," announcing Thursday that merit will dictate who gets the 2,000-odd knighthoods, peerages and shiny gold medals awarded each year.

Mr. Major also abolished the old class distinction between bravery medals, which reserved the military cross for officers and the military medal for grunts.

Opposition lawmakers jeered much of Mr. Major's speech and said his reforms didn't go far enough.

"If he really means what he says about stopping automatic honours, could he not usefully start with Conservative members of parliament?" said Mr. Smith.

In a country which sometimes appears to be organised like a costume party, with its hierarchy identified by ye olde titles and antique costumes, the distribution of honours is taken most seriously.

"The whole system makes the country look like a laughingstock, when people are bedecked in ribbons that have no meaning, that in some cases are having old

political debts paid off for reasons that are very despicable," said Labour Party lawmaker Tony Benn, who wants the honours system abolished.

The system dates to the 17th century when monarchs sold knighthoods to pay for military adventures.

During the 11 years Margaret Thatcher was prime minister, just over 40 per cent of the 176 peerages and knighthoods recommended for businessmen went to those who had contributed to the Conservative Party.

Unsung heroes are honoured from time to time, such as the ornithologist who found out what was killing the queen's swans, and the caterer who fed rescue workers following the 1987 crash of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland.

But certain jobs virtually guarantee the holder a knighthood, or "k" as it's known to aspiring sirs. That includes ambassadors, the head of Scotland Yard, and permanent secretaries who run government ministries like Sir Humphrey of the "yes, minister," TV series.

"Awards should not be automatic and follow simply as a result of doing a particular job," Mr. Major. "Honours should be awarded on merit for exceptional achievement or exceptional service over and above that which normally might be expected."

The only automatic honours will be for High Court judges, to retain their independence.